

# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



## THESIS

### SUCCESS OF TERRORISM IN WAR: THE CASE OF CHECHNYA

by

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September 1999

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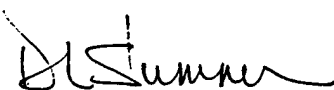
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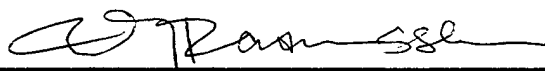
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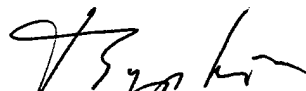


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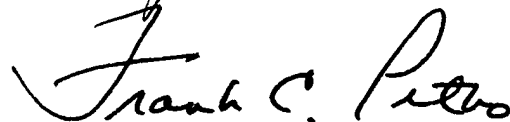
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## **ABSTRACT**

Russia militarily invaded Chechnya in December 1994 expecting to easily suppress the separatist uprising in the region. The Russian Army was unprepared and had greatly underestimated the Chechen forces under the command of former Soviet Air Force General Jokhar Dudayev and his motivated field commanders with recent war experience in Afghanistan, Abkazia, and Azerbaijan. When Russian forces began to gain a decided advantage (due to overwhelming firepower and numeric superiority) between February and June of 1995 and began attacking the last Chechen strongholds deep in the southern mountains, Chechen tactics changed. The June hostage raid, led by Chechen Commander Shamil Basayev, against Russian civilians in the town of Budennovsk marked the beginning of a successful campaign of terrorism by Chechen combatants that had a decisive impact on the outcome of the war. The Budennovsk episode, which resulted in a short-lived cease-fire, was followed by a series of more varied terrorist attacks between June 1995 and January 1996. These attacks were successful in swaying public opinion against the war effort, in creating widespread fear among the Russian population well beyond the borders of Chechnya, and ultimately led to Chechnya's victory over Russia.



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# Chechnya

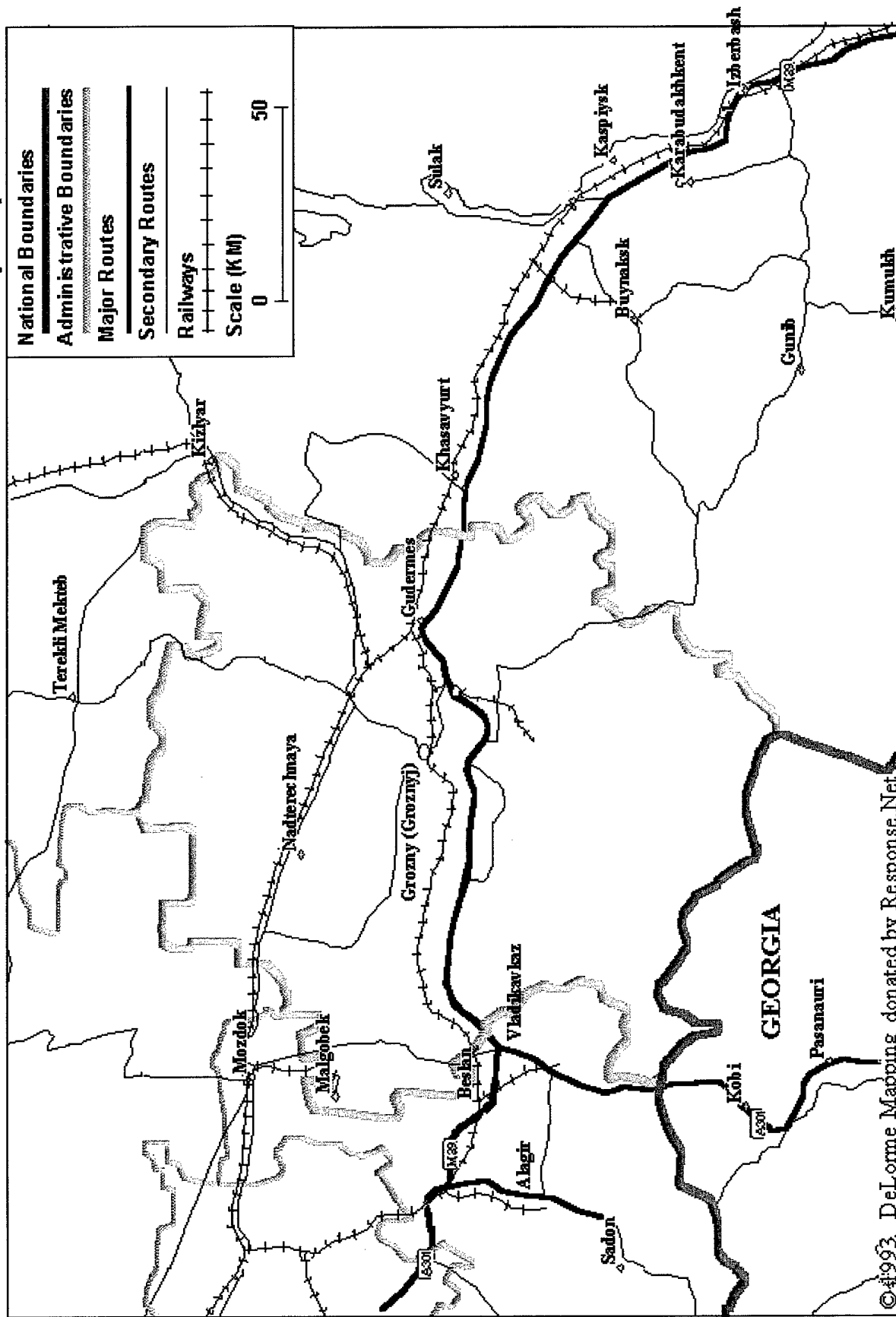


Figure 1: Map of Chechnya

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# RUSSIAN REPUBLIC OF CHECHNYA - Roads and Rails

updated by ReliefWeb: 30.5.96



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Figure 2: Map of Russian Republic of Chechnya - Roads and Rails

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Chechen people see themselves as a strong, lone wolf – proud, independent, resilient, and fierce. This image is so symbolic to Chechens that it appears on their green national flag and in the Chechen Republic Homepage on the Internet. As described by Suzanne Goldenberg, author of *The Pride of Small Nations: The Caucasus and Post-Soviet Disorder*, the symbolism is profound; the wolf, Chechnya's "emblem of freedom."

The emblem of freedom shows a seated wolf on a mountain top in the light of a full moon. The green represents Islam, and the wolf the uncompromising independence of the mountain people.<sup>1</sup>

On the Chechen Homepage under the heading of "Chechen People," you can access a photograph of a black wolf and large bison. The accompanying caption reads, "the wolf is a Chechen and the bison is a Russian. The small wolf is facing a big, strong bison and the wolf is ready to fight."<sup>2</sup>

The image of a Chechen wolf facing down a Russian bison, and the Chechen War itself, present inescapable parallels to the biblical fable of David and Goliath. In the fable, a small, young, ill-equipped David defeats the giant Goliath with a mighty blow from a slingshot. In the Chechen War, a numerically inferior, less well equipped Chechen National Guard managed to defeat the huge Russian state and its powerful army with a series of mighty blows from another unorthodox weapon. The Chechen weapon that brought down the Russian giant is terrorism.

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<sup>1</sup> Suzanne Goldenberg, *The Pride of Small Nations: The Caucasus and Post-Soviet Disorder* (London: Zed Books, 1994), 183.

<sup>2</sup> "Chechen People," Chechen Republic Homepage, <http://www.amina.com/chechens>; Internet.

The Russian war effort was plagued with problems when military and federal troops first entered Chechnya, in December 1994, with the objectives of suppressing the three-year old nationalist movement in the region, reinstating a 'legitimate' government, and restoring order. Russia suffered from problems of poor preparedness, inexperienced and inadequately trained forces, inept leadership, failed logistics, lack of coordination between military and federal units, inadequate security, and underestimation of the enemy's capabilities. It took Russian forces two months to gain control of most of Grozny, the capital city; a job they had predicted would take a week. Despite this slow start, however, Russia quickly began to push Chechen forces deeper into the southern mountains through a methodical conquest of towns and villages along the way. By early June 1995, with Russian units launching attacks on the last Chechen strongholds, Russia seemed certain to win.

The Chechens had fought valiantly with great tenacity and courage, but Russia's much larger, more powerful forces had overcome them. Chechnya was losing its fight for independence from Russia just as it had more than a century before. Then one desperate and now infamous Chechen commander, Shamil Basayev, launched a series of terrorist attacks against Russian civilians beyond the war zone that very effectively changed the course and the ultimate outcome of the Chechen War.

Russia lost the Chechen War, but why? A number of accounts have analyzed Russia's military failings and tactical inadequacies during the war in an effort to answer that question.<sup>3</sup> Those analyses have explored in detail the problems mentioned above and

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<sup>3</sup> Tactical analyses reviewed in the course of researching this thesis include: Raymond Finch, "Why the Russian Military Failed in Chechnya" (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, undated);

a gamut of other contributing factors. Generally, Russia is given much more credit for losing the war, than Chechnya is given for winning it. The position taken in this thesis is that Russia would have won the war despite all of its problems. Russia's loss was due not so much to the failings of the Russian Army, but more to Chechnya's strategic use of terrorism. The basic premise of this thesis is that the campaign of terror, executed by Chechen combatants over a seven month period from mid-June 1995 to late January 1996, determined Chechnya's success and Russia's loss.

No substantive body of work to date has evaluated the strategic contribution that terrorism played in Chechnya's winning of the war. That is what this thesis sets out to do. The research materials gathered for use in this thesis consist primarily of numerous professional articles, the findings of military and humanitarian research organizations, and vast media accounts and interpretations of events during the war.

Why did Chechnya resort to terror as a tactic of war? How significant was the use of terrorism to the Chechnya's victory? What are the implications for Chechnya and for future warfare?

In this introductory chapter, terrorism will be delineated from legitimate acts of war through examination of globally accepted laws governing warfare and human rights. Chapter II provides a historical overview of Chechnya and outlines events in the three

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Charles Blandy, David Isby, David Markov and Steven Zaloga, "The Chechen Conflict: A Microcosm of the Russian Army's Past, Present, and Future," *Jane's Intelligence Review, Special Report Number 11*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 1996; Vitaly Shlykov, "The War in Chechnya: Implications for Military Reform and Creation of Mobile Forces," in *War in Chechnya: Implications for Russian Security Policy*, ed. Mikhail Tsyarkin (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, July 1996), 57-71; Stephen Blank and Earl Tilford Jr., "Russia's Invasion of Chechnya: A Preliminary Assessment," *Strategic Studies Institute Special Report*, Carlisle Barracks PA: US Army War College, 1995; and *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook 1996* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 240-246.



years leading up to full-scale war with Russia. Chechnya's campaign of terrorism during the war is detailed in Chapter III and, in conclusion, Chapter IV will provide responses to the questions above. A chronology of the key events covered in this thesis is provided in the appendix for use as a quick reference.

## A. DEFINING TERRORISM

There is no universally accepted definition of terrorism.<sup>4</sup> More than one hundred definitions were in use in 1981 and no generic consensus has since emerged, nor is one likely to be forthcoming.<sup>5</sup> In *Terrorism in Context*, Martha Crenshaw succinctly explains the problem of defining terrorism:

Terrorism is an ambiguous variable not easily measured or quantified, in part because there are multiple forms of terrorism, and they are easily confused with other styles of violence.<sup>6</sup>

Crenshaw goes further toward explaining the lack of consensus on a definition in a paper she authored for the Institute of East-West Security Studies.

... the effort to define terrorism has led to widespread confusion and misunderstanding. Definitions are often subjective and self-serving, or thought to be so by those who oppose the political interpretation they support. The international community is still working to develop a common and acceptable vocabulary for discussing the issue. Some ambiguities are unavoidable because

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<sup>4</sup> Primary sources used in the Terrorism and Law section include: David Long, *The Anatomy of Terrorism* (New York: The Free Press, 1990); Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in Context* (University Park PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); idem, *Terrorism and International Cooperation: Occasional Paper Series 11* (New York: Institute for East-West Security Studies, 1989); James Bond, *The Rules of Riot: Internal Conflict and the Law of War* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974); and Brigitte Nacos, "After the Cold War: Terrorism Looms Larger as a Weapon of Dissent and Warfare," *Current World Leaders*, Volume 39, No. 4 (August 1996), 11-26. See also Louis Beres, "Terrorism, Law and Special Operations: Legal Meanings for the SOF Commander, *Special Warfare*, Volume 11, No. 1 (Winter 1998), 28-36.

<sup>5</sup> Long, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context*, 6.

they stem from the fact that terrorism is a complex and diverse activity, assuming a variety of forms, including hostage-taking, mass-casualty bombings, assassination and hijackings, and claiming a variety of motives, some comprehensible and some manifestly unrealistic. To pretend that terrorism is a unitary phenomenon is a misleading oversimplification, although terrorist activity has patterns and structures.<sup>7</sup>

Though the business of defining terrorism is confusing, there exists commonality, what Crenshaw describes as patterns, underlying the varied definitions of terrorism. The goals of terrorism are political intimidation and widespread fear; the objective is political change or concession. Terrorist acts are well planned, always violent, and occur without warning. The victims of terrorism are unsuspecting innocents (non-combatants), but society at large and the political structures opposed by the terrorists' cause are the intended targets. For this reason, publicity is critical to the success of any terrorist action.

On the topic of publicity, Chechen authorities always ensured that their messages and their version of events were presented as widely as possible. Correspondents were given very liberal access into Chechen areas throughout the war. Shamil Basayev more than anyone else recognized the importance of extensive media coverage. He demanded coverage during terrorist activities and otherwise courted the media openly. He issued personally signed safe passage documents for some correspondents, gave interviews from his command posts or living quarters very frequently, and on occasion had correspondents as guests in his home. Anatol Lieven, a correspondent for the *London Times*, was a recipient of "Basayev's hospitality" on a number of occasions and was once

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<sup>7</sup> Crenshaw, *Terrorism and International Cooperation*, 2-3.

a guest in the home of Basayev's aunt.<sup>8</sup> Carlotta Gall spoke of gaining access to places in Chechnya as a reporter for *The Independent*, another London publication.

They [Chechen fighters] were polite, especially to a journalist from Britain which retains a good reputation in Chechnya from pre-revolutionary times. Any suspicion they showed was instantly dispelled by a pass bearing Mr. Basayev's personal red stamp with its emblem of the lone wolf.<sup>9</sup>

Returning to the complexities of defining terrorism, the task becomes even more complicated when trying to "distinguish terrorism in particular from political violence in general."<sup>10</sup> Terrorism is often confused with forms of low intensity conflict such as guerilla warfare, insurgencies, and nationalist movements since these activities "involve low-level violence . . . by weaker parties in conflict," that often resort to terrorism as a tactic.<sup>11</sup> Hence, the coining of phrases like "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" and "terrorism is the weapon of the weak." This phenomenon of terror does not occur in all low intensity conflicts, however, and when it does it is but one tactic used in combination with 'legitimate' warfare, as prescribed by international and customary law.<sup>12</sup>

In the case of Chechnya, the threat of terrorism was ever present, but terror was not employed until the situation became desperate in June 1995. Seven months later, when Chechnya had regained the upper hand, Chechen combatants stopped committing

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<sup>8</sup> Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 21, 22.

<sup>9</sup> "Basayev Interviewed on Chechen Conflict," *The Independent* (London), 17 August 1996, FBIS-SOV-96-161, 11 paragraphs, paragraph 7.

<sup>10</sup> Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Crenshaw, *Terrorism and International Cooperation*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Long, 123.

acts of terror against noncombatants and reverted back to 'legitimate' warfare against military targets.

The overriding political characteristic of terrorism is what sets it "apart from violent criminal acts or those of the emotionally disturbed."<sup>13</sup> The egregious violence and stark criminality are what set it apart from other forms of political violence.<sup>14</sup>

Legitimate warfare adheres to customarily accepted norms of human behavior and humanitarian law; terrorism does not.

## **B. THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITARIAN LAW AND ITS APPLICATIONS IN THE CASE OF CHECHNYA**

Mankind is often inhumane and very prone to war. "In the 3,500 years since man began writing his history, he has recorded only 270 years of peace."<sup>15</sup> Terrorism is rooted in the worst of man's inhumanity and before the custom of laws came into place to curb atrocity, man was unconscionably brutal, killing everyone and destroying everything in his way with little provocation.

The Jews were the first to display inklings of humanity for one's enemies, but the establishment and practice of formalized rules of war first appeared among the Romans and the Greeks. These rules accorded protection for noncombatants, certain other officials and manmade structures, and respectful treatment of the dead; they outlawed the use of poisonous weapons, and established a "custom of truces" for managing the dead,

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<sup>13</sup> Long, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>15</sup> Bond, 7.

exchanging prisoners and conducting other administrative functions. These rules were not legally binding, but were customarily practiced among the Greeks and Romans and from them these practices spread to other cultures of the time. Of course, the motivations behind establishing rules of war were born out of self-interest as much as any humanitarian impulse. Political influences, too, contributed. Just as today, it was advantageous to limit the destruction of what might someday be your property through conquest.<sup>16</sup>

The “law of arms” and the concept of “just war” further developed in the medieval era under the guidance of the Catholic Church and, with the rise of sovereign states, war became accepted as an instrument of foreign policy. During the Middle Ages, the laws governing the conduct of war expanded to regulate discipline within armies, the handling of administrative matters, and the conduct of combatants toward their enemies (to include the obligation of knights to “grant quarter” to opponents wishing to surrender). These laws, for the first time, were applicable to both international and internal conflicts. As in ancient times, these rules became customarily observed by those not bound to them by law.<sup>17</sup>

The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years War, is considered the origin of modern international law. The law of war was the first undertaking of the treaty members and the resulting “Rights of War and Peace,” by Grotius, established the basis for our present day rules. The guiding principles are the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 9-12.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 13-15.

protection of noncombatants, the limiting of destruction, and the treatment of surrendered soldiers. As in ancient and medieval times, the new laws became customary practice, and even militaries not bound to them largely adhered to them. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, the principles ascribed in Grotius' work began to appear in military manuals and state treaties.<sup>18</sup> Of particular significance, the laws of war were applied in some internal conflicts. In *The Rules of Riot*, James Edward Bond provided this excerpt from the regulations governing the Union Army during the American Civil War:

Military necessity admits of all direct destruction of life or limb of armed enemies, and of other persons whose destruction is incidentally unavoidable in the armed contests of the war; it allows of the capturing of every armed enemy, and every enemy of importance to the hostile government, or of peculiar danger to the captor; it allows of all destruction of property, and obstruction of the ways and channels of traffic, travel, or communication, and of all withholding of sustenance or means of life from the enemy; of the appropriation of whatever an enemy's country affords necessary for the subsistence and safety of the army, and of such deception as does not involve the breaking of good faith either positively pledged, regarding agreements entered into during the war, or supposed by modern law of war to exist. Men who take up arms against one another in public war do not cease on the account to be moral beings, responsible to one another and to God.

Military necessity does not admit of cruelty – that is, the infliction of suffering for the sake of suffering or for revenge, nor of maiming or wounding except in fight, nor of torture to extort confessions. It does not admit of the use of poison in any way, nor the wanton devastation of a district. It admits of deception, but disclaims acts of perfidy; and, in general, military necessity does not include any act of hostility which makes the return to peace unnecessarily difficult.<sup>19</sup>

Bond concludes from this passage: "That a civil war rather than an international conflict should produce such a regulation evidences . . . the general desirability of applying the law of war to internal conflicts."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 15-17.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 17, n 49.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

It was the American Civil War that prompted an international movement to codify the laws of war.<sup>21</sup> A series of International Conventions and Declarations set about the task. These included the Geneva Conventions of 1863 and 1906, the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, and the 1874 Brussels Declaration. Each, in succession, revised and considered for adoption the guidelines prescribed in the previous ones. World War I, once again, emphasized the significance of customary law in the absence of legal necessity and the power of universally accepted norms for human behavior. The Geneva and Hague Conventions were not legally binding in World War I because not all of the participants were signatories. Yet, the “participants generally complied with their provisions and even concluded more detailed agreements covering treatment of civilians and prisoners of war.”<sup>22</sup> By World War II, most of the participants had ratified the Hague and Geneva (as revised in 1929) Conventions.

In 1949, Geneva hosted four Conventions on the treatment of the wounded and sick in land battle, the treatment of wounded, sick and shipwrecked at sea, the treatment of prisoners of war, and the protection of noncombatants, respectively. These conventions still “enjoy almost universal adherence” today.<sup>23</sup>

As discussed, adherence to international law has occurred throughout history without the impetus of legal obligation; hence, customary law seems to prevail. This point has been highlighted throughout this section to provoke understanding for the universal outrage felt over acts of terrorism in peace or in war. The laws that have

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 26.

governed the conduct of war since the Middle Ages above all else protect the rights of noncombatants, the preferred targets of terrorists. Louis Beres provides this appraisal of the importance of customary law, or as he terms it “natural law:”<sup>24</sup>

For more than 2000 years, the idea of natural law has served as the ultimate standard of right and wrong, of lawfulness and lawlessness.

It must also be understood that all law is rooted in natural law, and that natural law could never countenance violence against the innocent; that is, natural law would not consider such violence to be outside the boundaries of terrorism.<sup>25</sup>

Until 1949, however, states were, from a legal standpoint, free to handle internal conflicts as they saw fit, and rebel forces had no recourse or protections once they displayed themselves in armed opposition to the state. Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions was the first, and remains the only, internationally binding set of rules that can be mandated in internal conflicts. Article 3 is “common to all four Geneva Conventions of 1949,” and is “often called the ‘miniature convention’ because it embodies the fundamental principles of the law of war.”<sup>26</sup> Though limited in scope, Article 3 applies “in the case of armed conflict not of an international character” and provides for the basic human rights of “persons taking no active part in the hostilities.”<sup>27</sup> It requires, at a minimum, the humane and fair treatment of noncombatants and the sick and wounded by prohibiting physical harm, hostage-taking, humiliating or degrading treatment, and summary execution. Article 3 also makes the offer of humanitarian

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<sup>24</sup> Customary law, modern law, and natural law are interchangeable terms used to express the customs and practices generally adhered to by society.

<sup>25</sup> Beres, 33.

<sup>26</sup> Bond, 16, n 43.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 34-35, n 106. Excerpted from the preamble and paragraph 1 of Article 3.



service possible. (Article 3 does not mention limiting destruction or the use of specific types of weapons.) Once rebels achieve 'belligerent' status, they become "a *de facto* state" and as such are entitled to the benefits and are restricted to the limits of the law.<sup>28</sup> To be considered belligerent the state's opposition must have a "responsible government," possess territory, have an army that functions under the law of war, be recognized as a belligerent by a third state, and be engaged in hostilities.<sup>29</sup> Chechnya met these requirements until it turned to illegal tactics and began targeting Russian noncombatants.

Of course, the very atrocities that the laws governing war seek to curtail continue to happen from time to time, but the development of humanitarian law, the basis for the laws of war, represents the sincere desire of mankind to limit the suffering. Additionally, history has shown the genuine willingness of man to adhere to rules that will limit his own violent potential.

This makes the events in Chechnya even less justifiable. Chechnya has displayed not only its knowledge of but also its respect for customary and international laws. In 1992, a self-proclaimed independent Chechnya adopted a new Constitution. Article 3 of the Chechen Constitution reads:

The human being constitutes the highest value and main aim of state policy. The Chechen Republic respects and protects human rights, secures equal opportunities for the free development of the individual, and guarantees social justice and the protection of the individual. Human rights in the Chechen Republic are secured

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 53.

in accordance with generally recognized principles and norms of international law.<sup>30</sup>

Shamil Basayev often spoke of international law when deploring Russian aerial bombardments. When outlining, in a May 1996 interview, the goals for cessation of hostilities as he saw them, he called for the end of bombardments and Russian troop withdrawal followed by "democratic elections based on international legal standards."<sup>31</sup>

The following statements, from an article written by Brigitte Nacos for *Current World Leaders*, summarize a number of key points made thus far; especially, Chechnya's methodical use of terrorism, the role played by the media, and Dudayev's awareness of the international implications.

In the Chechen rebels' struggle for independence terrorism figured prominently from the onset. Well aware of their own military weakness and Moscow's overwhelming military power, rebel leaders warned as early as 1992 that they would detonate bombs in the Moscow subway system and attack vulnerable nuclear plants . . . Eventually, they resorted repeatedly to the classic terrorist act – taking and holding large numbers of Russians hostage. By early 1996 [Jokhar] Dudayev, the leader of the Chechen separatists, threatened terrorist attacks against Western Europe, not Moscow, charging that the West supported Russia's aggression against Chechnya. Dudayev used the threat of transnational terrorism in an obvious effort to move the Russian-Chechen civil strife from the domestic into the international realm.<sup>32</sup>

When Chechen separatists took Russian civilians hostage during their protracted struggle against the Russian military, it was by definition an act of domestic terrorism. If this had happened in the Soviet Union of old, the Kremlin could and probably would have ended the hostage situation with military might regardless of the hostages' fate. But with a free press broadcasting TV pictures of desperate hostages and their families all over Russia and the world, President

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Henze, *Islam In The North Caucasus: The Example of Chechnya* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1995), 35.

<sup>31</sup> "Chechen Leader Basayev Interviewed," *Vecherniy Novosibirsk* (Russia), 1 March 1996, FBIS-SOV-96-062, 28 paragraphs, paragraph 4.

<sup>32</sup> Nacos, 15-16.

Boris Yeltsin had to consider and actually deal with domestic and international reactions to his crisis management and especially to the use of force.<sup>33</sup>

Before concluding discussion on the development of humanitarian law, it should also be acknowledged that not all laws governing warfare are absolute. Humanitarianism and military necessity are contradictory. Trying to accommodate both when establishing the rules of warfare leads to some ambiguity. Military necessity can at times outweigh humanitarian concerns. Some rules are absolute, such as the prohibitions on hostage taking. Others are not. The 'non-absolute' rules, such as those governing aerial bombardment, are ambiguous and the source of much debate.

The examples, hostage taking and aerial bombardment, selected to illustrate the absoluteness and ambiguities of humanitarian law are not accidental choices. They are very central issues in the case of Chechnya and must be considered when discerning the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the tactics employed by both the Chechens and the Russians. Hostage taking is an act of terrorism. It is unequivocally illegal under humanitarian law and outside the boundaries of customary behavior. The rules governing aerial bombardment warrant evaluation since Chechen President Jokhar Dudayev and field commander Shamil Basayev have repeatedly offered Russian aerial bombardments as justification for their acts of terror.

### **C. THE ISSUE OF AERIAL BOMBARDMENT AND CHECHNYA AS A CASE IN POINT**

Combatants who resort to terrorism as a tactic in war do not consider themselves

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

terrorists. They feel that their actions are justified by their 'underdog' status or in retribution for wanton death and destruction they have suffered at the hands of their enemy. They turn to terrorism only as a last resort to overcome insurmountable odds; terror is their last hope for victory, or so the story goes. And as Crenshaw points out, "oppositions who use terrorism also attempt to provide frames of reference and comparisons that place them in a morally advantageous light."<sup>34</sup> That was certainly the case in Chechnya. Shamil Basayev, the Chechen commander who led the Budennovsk hostage raid, has repeatedly justified Chechen tactics by drawing reference to Russian bombardments of Chechen towns and villages. Here are two examples of this, and his frequent references to international law, from interviews in 1996:

They say that Budennovsk was terror. And the fact that the Russian Air Force is bombing our villages every day – that is not terror? . . . [Budennovsk] was a response reaction. We were compelled to resort to extreme means in order simply to survive.<sup>35</sup>

I am not a bandit . . . Russia is breaking all the international laws and the United Nations does nothing.<sup>36</sup>

Russia did conduct brutal aerial and artillery bombardments on the Chechen capital of Grozny during the first three months of the war, from December 1994 through February 1996. Not only Chechens, but humanitarian organizations, to include Russia's own human rights commission and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), considered the intensity of bombardments excessive in those early

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<sup>34</sup> Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> "Basayev on Russian Inefficiency in Chechnya," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Moscow), 15 May 1996, FBIS-SOV-96-095-S, 9 paragraphs, paragraph 8.

<sup>36</sup> "Basayev Interviewed on Nazran Talks, Chechnya War," *Corriere Della Sera* (Milan, Italy), 12 June 1996, FBIS-SOV-96-155, 12 paragraphs, paragraph 9.

months. Russia reduced the intensity and frequency of bombardments after the initial battle to take Grozny and did not resume that initial intensity even after the momentum of battle shifted in Chechnya's favor a few months later.<sup>37</sup> In this regard, Chechnya serves as a case in point for Bond's assertion that:

First, states that quell riots, insurrections, or even revolts quickly do not feel bound to respect Article 3. In the absence of any widely held expectation that they should conform to Article 3, they act under emergency or martial law. The internal conflict is over before the international community can apprise itself of the facts and generate any pressure on the competing parties to comply with the provisions of Article 3 or humanitarian law in general. States do, second and nevertheless, accept some obligation to treat opposing forces humanely if the conflict drags on beyond several weeks or months.<sup>38</sup>

As pointed out by Nacos, it is very unlikely that the old Soviet Union would have felt any pressure to reduce bombardments. In those days, of course, the events would have remained obscured to glances from the outside world or from inside the Soviet Union itself. Here again the importance of a large media presence in Chechnya can not be overemphasized, not when considering the success of Chechen terror tactics or when considering Russia's reduction of bombardments. Russia had to consider seriously the international reprisals that it received.

Aerial bombardments are seen by many, not just the Chechens, as unconscionable, and there have been strong efforts to ban bombings since the balloon and the canon were invented. Article 25 from the Hague Convention of 1907 prohibited such attacks on undefended cities; however, there is another rule that permits the "incidental

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<sup>37</sup> For employment of Russian air assets see Dennis Marshall-Hasdell, *Russian Air Power in Chechnya* (Sandhurst England: Conflict Studies Research Center P20, March 1996) and "Frontal and Army Aviation in the Chechen Conflict" (Sandhurst England: Conflict Studies Research Center ADVAB 1020, June 1995).

<sup>38</sup> Bond, 60-61.

injury” of noncombatants during attacks on “legitimate military targets.”<sup>39</sup> In this ambiguous situation, those against aerial bombings, the Red Cross being the most vigilant, try to fall back on the broad protections in Article 3 in hopes of persuading a ban. To date all attempts have failed. States have successfully argued that military necessity prevails on the issue of bombardments. However questionable Russia’s target selection or aim may have been over Grozny, the bombing campaign was not illegal. Aerial bombardment is an accepted form of warfare. Hostage taking, on the other hand, is not. One does not justify the other in law or in custom.

Returning to a broader focus, the nature of war has changed dramatically since the end of the cold war. In the regional, low intensity wars of today, the threat of terrorism is inescapable. Recent events in Somalia, Bosnia, and elsewhere introduced terrorism as a growing and disturbing trend in modern warfare. In Chechnya, the growing trend reached maturity. The Chechen War provides the most vivid example of the strategic use of terrorism as a tactic of war. Chechnya employed terrorism more extensively and more successfully than previously witnessed in modern warfare.

Of course, not all nationalists, revolutionaries, and guerilla fighters are terrorists.<sup>40</sup> So, why did Chechnya resort to a campaign of terrorism? To fully evaluate terrorism as it occurred during the Chechen War and to aid in drawing implications, a review of Chechen history and the events leading up to the war are necessary and logical places to begin.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 69-70.

<sup>40</sup> Crenshaw, *Terrorism and International Cooperation*, 5.



## II. CHECHNYA

Chechnya, located in the North Caucasus region, is one of Russia's southern republics.<sup>41</sup> It is situated between the Russian republic of Dagestan to the north and east, the republics of Ingushestia and North Ossetia to the west, and Georgia, formerly a Soviet Republic, borders Chechnya to the south.<sup>42</sup>

Chechnya is 5,800 square miles in size, just slightly larger than the state of Connecticut. The terrain to the north consists of fertile plains and two major rivers, the Terek and Sunja. In the south, elevation rises from wooded foothills to the mountains of the Caucasus range. This has been Chechen homeland for thousands of years.

The population of Chechnya before the outbreak of war with Russia in 1994 was estimated at just over one million. According to the last available census data, collected in 1989, approximately two-thirds of the inhabitants of Chechnya then were ethnic Chechens, seventy percent of whom still lived in rural areas where they farmed and raised livestock. Most of the Russians living in Chechnya migrated there, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, for employment opportunities in the developing petroleum industry.<sup>43</sup> In

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<sup>41</sup> Principal sources for Chapter II include Edward Kline, *The Conflict in Chechnya* (Watham MA: The Andrei Sakharov Foundation, 24 March 1995), 68 paragraphs.; "Key Facts and Figures About Chechnya" (Reuters, 12 February 1997), 14 paragraphs; Paul Henze, *Russia and the Caucasus* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1996); and Paul Henze, *Islam In The North Caucasus: The Example of Chechnya* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1995). See also Paul Henze, *Conflict in the Caucasus* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1993).

<sup>42</sup> Georgia obtained its independence from Russia in 1991, but suffered intensive civil war and ethnic conflict, from 1991 to 1994, especially in the northwestern region of Abkazia. Chechen President Dudayev supported Abkazia in its fight for independence from Georgia in 1992-1993, and it was there that Chechen fighter Shamil Basayev reached prominence as a field commander. See Chapter III for more details.

<sup>43</sup> Henze, *Islam In The North Caucasus*, 18.



1989, Russians made up the largest ethnic minority with 269,000 people, and outnumbered Chechens in and around the capital city of Grozny by nearly two to one.<sup>44</sup>

The Chechens have a unique language that is most closely related to that of the Ingush, but very distinctive from the more widespread Slavic and Turkic tongues.

Most Chechens are Sunni Muslims who practice the Sufi form of Islam that places a mystical emphasis on personal unity with God and holy war. The conversion to Islam occurred between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, and is meshed into the Chechen culture with many older, stronger traditions that are based in clan structures and their rural, mountaineering heritage.

Prior to 1994, Grozny, the capital city, was a major center for oil production, refinement and transit via pipelines of oil and gas, and served as a hub for commercial and private transportation by vehicle and rail. All these infrastructures were decimated by the war and little restoration has taken place due to Chechnya's economic difficulties and current 'limbo' status politically.

Based on the peace agreement signed between Chechnya and Russia in late 1996, a decision on Chechnya's sovereignty has been delayed for five years. Russia recognizes the current Chechen government as provisional only and continues to employ economic sanctions against Chechnya.

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<sup>44</sup> For Census data, see Kline, paragraph 4.

## A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Chechen people are staunchly independent with a rich warfighting heritage. They fought valiantly for their independence against the Mongols in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, the Turks in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and against Russian imperial rule for nearly a hundred years beginning in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

The fiercest fighting against Russia occurred in the Caucasus War from 1817 to 1864. Imam Shamil, Chechen national hero and Shamil Basayev's namesake, led the resistance for more than 30 of those years until his surrender to Russian forces in 1859. Chechen resistance continued sporadically into the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Of this time, Edward Kline, President of the Andrei Sakharov Foundation, wrote "the Russians won by sheer force of numbers, and by carrying out a policy of relentless, destructive total war from fortress towns such as Grozny."<sup>45</sup>

In November 1922, Chechnya became an Autonomous Oblast of the Russian Federation and later, in 1934, upon merger with the neighboring Ingush Oblast, became the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. This new level of sovereignty, however, was quite nebulous and short-lived. Neither the Chechens nor the Ingush were spared from Stalin's madness during the purges of the 1930s and, in 1944, under Soviet suspicions that they had aided the German invaders, all Chechens and Ingush were systematically deported to Central Asia.

Most of the Chechens were forcibly resettled in Kazakhstan and many

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., paragraph 8.

ended up in the Soviet Gulag. It is estimated that one third of the Chechen population died during the period of resettlement from 1944 to 1957.

A vivid description of the Chechens appears in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*.

There was one nation that would not give in, would not acquire the mental habits of submission - and not just individual rebels among them, but the whole nation to a man. These were the Chechens. They were capable of rustling cattle, robbing a house, or sometimes simply taking what they wanted by force. They respected only rebels . . . everyone was afraid of them. No one could stop them from living as they did.<sup>46</sup>

In 1957, under decree by Khrushchev, the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was reconstituted and the Chechens were allowed to return to their homeland. Most Chechens returned home and once there enjoyed relative peace from 1957 to 1991.

#### **B. 1991-1994: CHECHNYA'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CIVIL WAR**

As in many Soviet republics, Glasnost and Perestroika fostered ideas of independence among many Chechens. In 1988, the Chechen-Ingush Popular Front emerged in political opposition to the Communist Party. This movement had originally formed as an environmental watch group in opposition to a proposed biochemical plant in Gudermes, but within months had adopted a nationalistic political platform. In June 1989, Doku Zavgayev, a Chechen, was elected as Secretary of the Communist Party. He was the first Chechen ever elected to serve as the Communist Party boss in Chechnya.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., paragraph 17.

By late 1990, the Chechen National Congress was convened and Jokhar Dudayev was elected as Chairman to its Executive Committee. The Chechen National Congress quickly called for Chechen-Ingush independence which was echoed within days by the Chechen-Ingush Supreme Soviet in the form of a Declaration of Sovereignty.

By the summer of 1991, the Chechens' less fervent partners, the Ingush, had come to the decision that they could best resolve any disputes with Moscow by remaining part of mother Russia. The major contention the Ingush held with Russia was over ancestral lands lost in 1944, and they were confident that they could regain their territory by accepting membership in the new Russian Federation. Chechnya and Ingushetia amicably separated in September 1991. In June 1992, the Russian Federation formally recognized that separation and adopted into law the creation of the Ingush Republic.<sup>47</sup>

#### **1. Jokhar Musaevich Dudayev**

Jokhar Dudayev was only weeks old in 1944 when his family was forcibly resettled in Kazakhstan. He was fourteen when they returned to Chechnya.<sup>48</sup> He became a member of the Communist Party in 1966, as a young man, and went on to a very successful career as an officer in the Soviet Air Force where he achieved the rank of Major General. He resigned his position as Commander of a Strategic Bomber Group in Estonia and retired from the Soviet military after his appointment to chair the Executive Committee of the newly formed Chechen National Congress. It would be Dudayev, not

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., paragraphs 28-29.

<sup>48</sup> Henze, *Russia And The Caucasus*, 12-13; idem *Islam In The North Caucasus*, 23-24, 27-29.

Zavgaev, who would lead Chechnya's challenge for independence from the failing Soviet Union.

While Zavgaev was in Moscow in August 1991, at the time of the failed coup, Dudayev set into motion a series of events to strip his presidential powers and ignite civil war in Chechnya. Dudayev denounced the attempted coup and used the events to incite a nationalist fervor that was manifested in large, riotous demonstrations supporting the Chechen National Congress and Dudayev. Zavgaev returned from Moscow a few days later, but was unable to regain control. In less than two weeks, Dudayev had formed the National Guard and the Chechen National Congress had transferred power to the Executive Committee. On 6 September, members of the National Guard entered a meeting of the Chechen-Ingush Supreme Soviet and forced Zavgaev to abdicate control of the Chechen government.<sup>49</sup>

## **2. Chechnya's Civil War and Russia's Reactions**

Following Dudayev's ouster of Zavgaev, the Chechen National Congress called for presidential elections to be held in October 1991. Prior to the elections, Moscow twice sent representatives to Chechnya to meet with authorities in an attempt to restore order and encourage renewed support for Zavgaev. Having failed in these efforts, Moscow dispatched Ruslan Khasbulatov, one of Grozny's representatives to the Russian Supreme Soviet, to Chechnya in September. His intervention resulted in the official removal of Zavgaev, the disbanding of the Chechen parliament, and the creation of a Provisional Council. The Provisional Council was comprised of representatives from

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<sup>49</sup> Kline, paragraphs 31-32.

Dudayev's "radical" nationalists, the Moscow-friendly "conservatives," and other splinter groups. Extreme dissention in the council prevented its ability to govern the Chechen Republic, so the Chechen National Congress went ahead with plans for presidential and parliamentary elections.

In early October, Moscow sent the Russian Vice-President, General Alexander Rutskoi, to Grozny. Shortly afterward, with the urgings of Rutskoi and Khasbulatov, the Russian Supreme Soviet adopted a resolution in which they denounced the Chechen National Congress and officially recognized the Provisional Council as the "only legitimate state power."<sup>50</sup> Thousands of Chechens demonstrated against the resolution in the streets of Grozny, and Dudayev rapidly expanded the National Guard.

Despite Moscow's political machinations, Chechnya held elections as scheduled on 27 October 1991 and Dudayev was elected President of Chechnya by an overwhelming majority of votes.<sup>51</sup> Russian President Boris Yeltsin responded to the elections by declaring a State of Emergency in Chechnya on 7 November and by dispatching Russian troops to Grozny. Dudayev countered Yeltsin by declaring martial law and mobilizing the National Guard.

When Russian troops arrived at the Grozny airport, they were outnumbered and easily detained by Chechen forces. Three days later, after the Russian Supreme Soviet failed to confirm Yeltsin's State of Emergency, the Russian troops detained in Chechnya were permitted to return to Russia.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., paragraph 36.

<sup>51</sup> Accounts vary as to Dudayev's percentage of the vote, between 70 and 90 percent.

From this point until 1994 Moscow, reluctant to use military force in Chechnya and preoccupied with political and economic instabilities of its own separate from the renegade republic of Chechnya, took little action.<sup>52</sup> Edward Kline described the situation this way:

Russia mainly followed a policy of benign neglect, except in the international arena where its adamant stance prevented any state from extending diplomatic recognition to the Chechen Republic.<sup>53</sup>

While Moscow was largely, though never entirely, inattentive to the rebellious republic, civil war continued and Chechnya quickly declined into a "criminal state." This terminology is intentional; not only had crime rates soared, but also Dudayev himself had placed a number of criminals in very important assignments. In November 1991, when he seized power and rapidly built up the National Guard, Dudayev released more than 600 Chechens from their jail cells and placed them into positions in the National Guard or on his personal staff.<sup>54</sup>

The civil war, escalating crime, economic sanctions imposed by Russia, and growing political destabilization all combined to have a rapidly devastating affect on Chechnya.

In 1992, Chechnya further antagonized Moscow on three counts. First, by involving itself in the Georgian civil war, providing asylum to deposed President Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Then, by sending Chechen forces, led by Shamil Basayev, into

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<sup>52</sup> The 1993 Russian Constitution listed Chechnya among the 89 "subjects" of the Federation. Its two Federation representatives were listed as "vacant."

<sup>53</sup> Kline, paragraph 40.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., paragraph 42.

Abkhazia to help the Abkhaz fight for independence from Georgia. And finally, by reports of widespread mistreatment of Russian citizens coming from the more than 250,000 Russians that emigrated from Chechnya between 1991 and 1994. In February 1994, when Tartarstan, since 1992 the only other holdout Russian republic, signed a treaty to accept Russian sovereignty in exchange for broad autonomy, Moscow refocused its attention on Chechnya.

By late 1994, it was apparent that Russia was providing support to the pro-Moscow opponents of Dudayev. Though Russia had long denied its involvement, the Federal Counterintelligence Service (FSK, formerly the KGB) had been running covert operations in Chechnya that ranged from the issuance of political propaganda to financial and military assistance for opposition leaders. This became clear on 26 November 1994 when seventy Russian soldiers were captured in Grozny by Dudayev's forces after an opposition attack failed to overrun the Presidential Palace. The FSK, it turned out, had recruited the captured soldiers from active duty units.<sup>55</sup> Once Russia officially acknowledged its involvement in the Chechen civil war, the Russian soldiers were released.

With the failure of covert efforts and probably due, at least in part, to embarrassment over the captured soldiers, Moscow rapidly advanced its method for handling the Chechen problem to full-scale war.

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<sup>55</sup> Kline, paragraph 49.



### C. THE BEGINNING OF WAR WITH RUSSIA

President Yeltsin's decree of 9 December 1994 ordered the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, and the FSK jointly "to use all available state means to ensure the security of the state, the rule of law, civil rights and liberties, the defense of public order, the fight against crime, and the disarming of all illegal armed formations" in Chechnya.<sup>56</sup> Two days later, Russia launched a three pronged attack into Chechnya.<sup>57</sup>

Russia had a much slower, more difficult time with Chechen forces than it had anticipated. Russian forces ran head-on into a host of problems, most of their own making. The invasion was poorly planned and too hastily executed, public support had not been garnered, Russian units were filled with inexperienced, young conscripts, Russia was not prepared for a prolonged engagement, and a litany of other shortcomings plagued the Russians. Many Russian units found themselves engaged in combat without much needed supplies virtually from the onset of hostilities.

Many of the Chechen fighters had combat experience from fighting in Afghanistan as members of the Soviet army and from fighting as mercenaries in Abkhazia and Azerbaijan, and were more highly motivated than Russian troops. Russia had grossly underestimated the Chechens' capability to fight and their resolve to win.

Chechen forces had conducted numerous successful raids on Russian arms depots and were equipped with confiscated artillery, armor, anti-tank weapons, automatic rifles,

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., paragraph 50.

<sup>57</sup> Primary sources for this section include Kline, and Pavel Felgenhauer, "The Chechen Campaign," in *War in Chechnya: Implications for Russian Security Policy*, ed. Mikhail Tsypkin (Monterey CA: Naval Post Graduate School, July 1996).

and grenades, but lacked sophisticated anti-air weapons.<sup>58</sup> And since Chechnya's very limited air assets of just over 100 confiscated aircraft and approximately thirty trained pilots had been destroyed early in the civil war, Russia possessed only one clear advantage, air supremacy.

Russian bombardments were extremely heavy particularly in the first 3-4 months of the war. Frederick Cuny provided the following description of Russian bombardments into Grozny during the first 2 months of the war:

To put the intensity of firing into perspective, the highest level of firing recorded in Sarajevo was 3,500 heavy detonations per day. In Grozny in early February, a colleague of mine counted 4,000 detonations per hour. Only in March did the Russians diminish their shelling and adopt a strategy of starving out the local population.<sup>59</sup>

Only after Russia came under condemnation as a result of negative publicity and the findings from humanitarian rights watch groups sent into Chechnya was the intensity of bombardments decreased. Russian Commissioner for Human Rights, Sergei Kovalev, headed the first of three humanitarian groups (in December 1994) that reported on the situation. The second and third watch groups sent in to Chechnya were sponsored by the OSCE in January and February 1995, respectively.

The first two groups reported gross violations of humanitarian laws with respect to "indiscriminate attacks" from heavy weapons and aircraft. Kovalev's group had estimated "as many as 24,000 civilian deaths between November 25 [1994] and January 25 [1995] due to the war" and "estimated that 19,000 of them were the result of bombing

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<sup>58</sup> Goldenberg, 190.

<sup>59</sup> Frederick Cuny, "Killing Chechnya," *New York Review of Books*, 6 April 1995, 15-17, 15.

and shelling.”<sup>60</sup> The second report also indicated some incidents of war crimes (looting, shootings) by Russian soldiers in Grozny. By the third visit in February 1995, bombardments had been scaled back and the report sighted distribution of Red Cross and other humanitarian relief shipments, public security, and management of refugees as the “most urgent problems.”<sup>61</sup> The OSCE has continued to maintain a monitoring program in Chechnya since March 1995.

Aided by the heavy bombardments early on and after repeated assaults, Russian forces managed to take the Presidential Palace on 19 January, but it would be another month before they controlled most of the heavily damaged capital city. During this time, intermittent cease-fires were agreed upon as needed to exchange POWs, manage the dead, and permit humanitarian response efforts by the International Red Cross and other relief agencies.

Russian forces gained momentum between February and April 1995 with successful assaults on other major Chechen towns and, by early June, Russian forces were launching assaults into Chechen strongholds in the southern mountain ranges.

Despite unpreparedness, ineffective leadership, and tactical weaknesses, Russia was poised to finish off the Chechen resistance in early June. Reflecting back on Edward Kline’s quote in the first section of this chapter, it seemed that Russia would once again defeat the Chechens by “sheer force of numbers” and overwhelming firepower.

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<sup>60</sup> Kline, paragraph 62.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., paragraph 61.

### III. CHECHEN TERRORISM

By early March 1995, three months into the war, nearly all Chechen fighters had retreated from Grozny and the capital city was solidly under Russian control. March was also the month during which the OSCE first established a monitoring mission inside Chechnya. Simultaneously Sergei Kovalev, Russia's High Commissioner for Human Rights, who had brought worldwide attention to Russia's excessive use of firepower and disregard for civilian losses in Chechnya a few months earlier, was dismissed.

During April and May, Russian forces began extending their conquests beyond Grozny. The towns of Argun, Shali, and Gudermes were seized in March, and Bamut, in the eastern foothills, was under attack by Russian forces. By the end of March most Chechen forces had fallen back into the foothills and many town leaders left to fend for themselves entered into agreements with Russian authorities that required them to recognize the Provisional Council, turn over their weapons, and refuse safe haven to Chechen fighters. Towns that failed to adhere to conditions of the agreements risked attack. One such town, Samaskhi, suffered brutally in a controversial three-day assault (6-8 April 1995) by Russian forces. The fact that Russian troops denied media and relief agency personnel entry into the area for several days, and that a few hundred civilians were killed in the assault, ignited controversy over Russian tactics and brought reprisals from the West.<sup>62</sup>

Soon after Samaskhi, Russian forces launched attacks on other Chechen towns and mountain strongholds to include Zakan-Yurt, Achkoy-Martan, Orekhovo, and

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<sup>62</sup> Lieven, 122.

Serzhen-Yurt. Vedenov, Imam Shamil's famous last stronghold and Shamil Basayev's birthplace, and Shatoy were the only remaining towns completely controlled by Chechen forces in May 1995, both located high in the mountains. Additionally, the OSCE's initial efforts to mediate peace talks had failed.<sup>63</sup>

By early June, fighting had reached Vedenov and Russian forces were targeting all of the remaining mountain strongholds that had previously been safe zones for retreating Chechen fighters. Vedenov was captured on 4 June and Shatoy fell to Russian forces on 13 June.<sup>64</sup> Eleven members of Shamil Basayev's family, to include his sister, were killed in the fighting at Vedenov.<sup>65</sup> In addition, more than 300,000 citizens of Chechnya were already reported as refugees in neighboring regions.<sup>66</sup> Despite Russia's early failings and initial gross underestimation of Chechnya's ability to wage war, Russia with its overwhelming firepower and numeric superiority had gained the decided advantage. Chechnya was poised for defeat. *SIPRI Yearbook 1996* described the situation as follows:

The overwhelming preponderance of the Russian armed forces in numbers and in equipment was such that they could not fail steadily to widen their control over the Chechen territory. By mid-1995, the fighters on the side of General [Jokhar] Dudayev, president of the self-proclaimed Chechen Republic, were reported to have been pushed to the mountainous southern part of Chechnya.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Lieven, 123-124; and M. A. Smith, *A Chronology of the Chechen Conflict, Part 1* (Sandhurst England: Conflict Studies Research Center, June 1995), 36-37, 44, and 47. See also "Chronology of Key Events in Chechnya Conflict" (Reuters, 30 July 1995), 26 paragraphs, paragraph 11.

<sup>64</sup> Lieven, 124.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>66</sup> Smith, Part 1, 37-47.

<sup>67</sup> *SIPRI Yearbook 1996*, 252.

The war, however, took a dramatic turn after the 14 June 1995 Chechen raid, led by Shamil Basayev, on Budennovsk; a Russian town located approximately 50 miles beyond the Chechen border with a population of about 100,000.

That event unveiled a decisive change in Chechen war tactics. Something was needed to halt, or at least delay, Russia's military momentum. Budennovsk did just that; it was the definitive turning point of the war and signaled a shift in the primary focus of Chechnya's military strategy away from the invading Russian forces to the political vulnerabilities of Moscow.

Anatol Lieven, in Chechnya covering the war as a correspondent for the London *Times*, provides a first hand account of the situation just before Budennovsk:

When I visited Serzhen Yurt and Vedenov (along with Sebastian Smith of AFP) in [May 1995], we saw considerable evidence that Chechen fortunes were at a low ebb, probably their lowest ebb of the entire war. Ammunition was very short, many of the men were extremely tired and in some cases morale had begun to crack. Basayev admitted later that the Chechens had been close to defeat, and said that as a result he had had to adopt the tactic of raids into Russia and the taking of civilian hostages.<sup>68</sup>

The raid on Budennovsk marked the first in a series of classic terrorist attacks against innocent Russian civilians that through extensive media coverage created widespread fear among the Russian population, turned public opinion against Moscow for being unable to protect its people from terror, and led to Chechnya's political and, ultimately, military victory over Russia.

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<sup>68</sup> Lieven, 123.

## A. THE TURNING POINT: BUDENNOVSK

### 1. The Assault: Wednesday, 14 June 1995

Chechen field Commander Shamil Basayev and approximately 100 of his men, hidden in coffin-filled trucks that were supposedly carrying Russian war dead home, crossed the Chechen border into the Stavropol region. In Budennovsk the Chechen fighters dismounted the trucks, divided into small teams of five or six men, joined up with other Chechen fighters already positioned throughout the town, and took control of several administrative buildings and private homes.<sup>69</sup> The buildings seized included a hospital, a maternity clinic, a bank, a communications center, and the town hall where they raised the green, white and red Chechen flag. Apparently, the only initial target they were unsuccessful in taking was the building that housed the local internal affairs department. The Chechens were armed with automatic rifles, machine guns, and grenade launchers.

Within hours Basayev's men had burned a number of homes and cars, killed 20 local police officers, shot an unknown number of civilians, and began rounding up hostages and consolidating them on the upper floors of the hospital. Spectators reported

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<sup>69</sup> Primary sources for the Budennovsk account include Lieven; Valentin Eliseenko, "Budennovsk Tragedy: Chechnya's Ricochet," *La Pensee Russe* (Moscow), 24-30 June 1995, 129 paragraphs; John Kohan, "Assault at High Noon," *Chicago Times*, 26 June 1995, 8 paragraphs; and "Russia: Terrorist Acts in 1993-1995 Chronicled," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Moscow), 25 January 1996, FBIS-SOV-96-028-S, 16 paragraphs. See also Raymond Finch, "A Face of Future Battle: Chechen Fighter Shamil Basayev," *Military Review*, March-June 1997, 33-41. Also see Carlotta Gall and Carey Scott, "Carnage in Hostage Hospital - Yeltsin Faces Fury for Chechen Attack," *Times* (London), 18 June 1995, 26 paragraphs; and three articles by Richard Beeston, "Russian Troops Poised to Attack Hostage Hideout," *Times* (London), 17 June 1995, 8 paragraphs; "Chechens Begin to Free All Hostages After Truce Deal," *Times* (London), 19 June 1995, 12 paragraphs; and "Chechen Siege Ends With Hostage Deal," *Times* (London), 20 June 1995, 12 paragraphs.

that the Chechens “drove over people” and “shot peaceful civilians in cold blood.”<sup>70</sup> In all ninety-one people were killed in the initial Chechen attack. That number includes wounded Russian soldiers that were killed when the hospital was seized.<sup>71</sup>

Threatening to kill the hostages, Basayev demanded the withdrawal of all Russian troops from Chechnya and the onset of direct negotiations between Dudayev and Yeltsin. Throughout the ordeal, the Chechens placed women, some of them pregnant, in the windows as human shields.

## **2. The Siege, 15-19 June**

Information on the situation in Budennovsk on June 14 was sketchy and many conflicting accounts of the terrorists’ identities and number of hostages were disseminated until, on the following day, large numbers of Russian anti-terrorist units, regular soldiers, police and journalists arrived and began a more accurate accounting of the situation. In his first press conference, held in the hospital basement on June 15, Basayev reaffirmed his demands of the first day and additionally demanded amnesty for all Chechen fighters and free elections for Chechnya.<sup>72</sup> Prior to the press conference, Basayev had ordered the execution of at least five hostages because the journalists did not arrive on time. Other hostages had been killed as well in retaliation for harm to

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<sup>70</sup> Kohan, paragraph 4.

<sup>71</sup> Lieven, 124.

<sup>72</sup> M. A. Smith, *A Chronology of the Chechen Conflict*, Part 2 (Sandhurst, England: Conflict Studies Research Center, January 1996), 4 -5.



Basayev's men; five hostages were killed for every Chechen fighter that was wounded and ten were killed for every Chechen that died.<sup>73</sup>

From the time of the first press conference on 15 June until the early morning hours of 17 June, the fourth day of the siege, negotiations took place hourly with no resolution and only a few incidents of sporadic gunfire. On 17 June, Russian Special Forces attempted to end the hostage crisis by storming the hospital on two occasions (at 5 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.). Russian units managed to secure the first floor of the hospital but could not advance to the upper floors where the hostages were being kept because of heavy Chechen resistance. They were also hampered in their efforts by the Chechen tactic of placing women holding white sheets into the windows for use as human shields.<sup>74</sup> A cease-fire was finally agreed upon and Basayev freed 227 (to include as many as 150 pregnant women) of his approximately 1,500 hostages.

By way of the media that was positioned throughout the town to cover the crisis, distressed residents of Budennovsk began calling for Prime Minister Victor Chernomydrin's personal intervention in the negotiation process. Their pleas were not ignored. The second storming of the hospital was over around 3:15 p.m. and less than two hours later Chernomydrin made a statement on Russian television. He denounced the hostage taking, tried to allay fears and assure viewers of a quick resolution, and pronounced his confidence in the government representatives handling the negotiations in Budennovsk.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Eliseenko, paragraph 40.

<sup>74</sup> Kohan, paragraph 7.

<sup>75</sup> Eliseenko, paragraphs 84-90.

The following afternoon, 18 June, Chernomydrin personally negotiated with Basayev via telephone. Later that day, on Russian television, the Prime Minister of Russia outlined the agreement he had brokered with Basayev:

For the purpose of releasing the hostages held in the town of Budennovsk, the government of the Russian Federation, one: guarantees the immediate cessation of combat activities and bombardment on the territory of Chechnya . . . Two: appoints a delegation for negotiations on peaceful settlement in the Chechen republic . . . Three: when all remaining hostages are released, the government will provide transportation for Basayev and his group to travel to their destination and guarantee in full their safe arrival in Chechnya . . .<sup>76</sup>

Once Russia had capitulated and an agreement was reached, Basayev began incrementally releasing hostages and continued to do so until the convoy was ready to take him and his victorious Chechen fighters back to Chechnya.

As a logistics plan was being developed, on 19 June, to meet the conditions of the agreement, Basayev demanded that "volunteer hostages" be selected to accompany the Chechens along the convoy route.

As many as 154 hostages were killed during the six day siege of Budennovsk.

### **3. 20 June, The Chechens Return Home**

Basayev had achieved most of his demands, a cease-fire and direct negotiations between Russia and Chechen President Dudayev. So, on 20 June, he released the remaining hospital hostages in exchange for trucks, buses, approximately 100 volunteer hostages comprised mainly of journalists and local government officials, and a refrigerated truck (for carrying back Chechen dead). Once safely back in Chechnya, Basayev released the volunteer hostages unharmed.

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<sup>76</sup> Smith, Part 2, 4-5. See also Finch, "A Face of Future Battle," 38.

As agreed, a cease-fire, although short-lived, went into effect immediately following the Budennovsk hostage crisis and peace negotiations began between Dudayev and Russian government officials.

Shamil Basayev, already previously renowned for his combat leadership skills, was elevated to hero status after the Budennovsk hostage taking. From that point on, he became the central Chechen figure in the war and systematically perpetuated other acts of terror against Russian civilian targets that would further deteriorate the Russian political machine and demoralize the Russian military.

## **A. PROFILE OF SHAMIL BASAYEV**

### **1. Background**

Shamil Basayev was born in 1965 in Vedenovsk, Chechnya.<sup>77</sup> He finished secondary school in 1982, then spent two years in the Soviet Army as a fireman. Unable to get into law school because of poor academic records, he worked on a state farm for the better part of four years. In 1987, Basayev gained admission into an Agricultural University and began studies. He was expelled for poor academic performance before completing his first year.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Primary sources for this section include Finch, "A Face of Future Battle;" Raymond Finch, *Emerging Threats* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, July 1997), 41 paragraphs; "Shamil Basayev - The Lone Wolf," *Moscow News*, 30 June 1995, 10 paragraphs; Anem Vetrov, "Shamil Basayev-Rational Terrorist," *Segodnya* (Moscow), 21 June 1995, FBIS-SOV-95-123, 34-35. Also see "Basayev on Russian Inefficiency in Chechnya;" Richard Beeston, "Moscow Wary as Chechen Rebel Chief Fights Election," *Times* (London), 25 January 1997, 10 paragraphs; and "Budennovsk Aftermath: North Caucasian Newspapers Publish Stories About Basayev" (British Broadcasting Corporation), 26 June 1995; 4 paragraphs.

<sup>78</sup> Vetrov contradicts other accounts. He indicates that Basayev received a "diploma" from the Land Management Institute in Moscow. Vetrov, 34.

The early 1990s can best be described as Basayev's mercenary years. For two and one half years he fought as a Colonel with his fellow Chechens from the Confederation of Caucasian People in Abkhazia, Georgia. Basayev soon became a well-respected commander among the Abkhaz resistance forces that were seeking independence from newly liberated Georgia. Though examples of human rights violations were common, the actions of his units there fell well short of the type of terrorist acts that he became notorious for during the Chechen War.

His unit became proudly known as the "Abkhaz Battalion" and Basayev was appointed Deputy Defense Minister in Abkhazia and thus responsible for all front line actions. While fighting in Abkhazia, Basayev had regular contact with Russian military officials that were clandestinely assisting the Abkaz in operational planning and intelligence.

In 1993, Georgia joined the CIS with Russian assurances to help end the conflict in Abkazia and a prolonged cease-fire began. Before returning home to Chechnya in 1994, Basayev and his unit also fought with the Azeris in the ethnic conflict with Armenians in the Azerbaijani enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. He and some of his men also participated in guerilla training in Afghanistan and Pakistan with the Mujahedin.<sup>79</sup>

It is unclear whether Basayev and his men were paid by the Russians for their efforts in Abkhazia or by the Azeri government for fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh. Basayev most likely funded much of his unit's travel and training during these years from

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<sup>79</sup> Finch, "A Face of Future Battle," 35; and Vetrov, 34.

criminal activities including robbery, weapons trade, and drug running, activities that he continued once back in Chechnya.

As a warfighter, Basayev, like his idol Imam Shamil, is known as a tenacious, effective, charismatic commander. His bravery and “from the front” leadership style are well respected, but Budennovsk remains the primary propellant of his notoriety.

Following Budennovsk, Dudayev was quoted as saying, “personnel of the reconnaissance battalion of suicide saboteurs under [Colonel] Shamil’s command should be included on a special list of sons and daughters of the fatherland forever,” and “Basayev is a Chechen national hero and he will be encouraged accordingly.”<sup>80</sup> Basayev and five others received the highest Chechen award for their actions in Budennovsk. It is not surprising then that Budennovsk was not the last time Basayev would participate in or orchestrate terrorist attacks on Russian non-combatant targets. Nor was it his first act of terrorism.

## **2. The Minvody Hijacking**

Basayev first emerged as a terrorist a year before reaching acclaim as a warfighter in Abkazia and shortly after Chechnya had been placed in a “State of Emergency” by Russia for holding unauthorized elections and declaring its independence from the Federation in November 1991.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> “Dudayev Appears on Television in Chechnya” (British Broadcasting Corporation), 18 August 1995, lines 19-21, 4 paragraphs, paragraph 3; and “Reactions to Agreements: Dudayev Claims Chechen-Russian Military Agreement is Legally Invalid” (British Broadcasting Corporation), 1 August 1995, paragraph 5.

<sup>81</sup> Primary sources on Minvody are Finch, *Emerging Threats*; “Shamil Basayev – The Lone Wolf;” and Yu Nikolaev, *The Chechen Tragedy: Who is to Blame?* (New York: NOVA Science Publishers, 1996).

With two accomplices, Basayev hijacked a TU-154 passenger plane in the town of Mineralnnye Vody. They threatened to blow up the plane if their demand that the State of Emergency be lifted was not met. They forced the pilot to fly to Turkey. Upon landing in Ankara, Basayev demanded a press conference. Turkish officials refused to deal with the terrorists or function as a mediator for Russia and permitted the plane to return to Grozny, Chechnya. The incident received a lot of media attention and did cause concern in the Russian public and parliament, although it is uncertain how much of an impact the incident had on parliament's failure to extend the State of Emergency.

All the passengers were released unharmed.

### **C. AFTER BUDENNOVSK**

A cease-fire went into effect immediately after Budennovsk, and the initial peace negotiations that followed seemed promising. The military accord signed on 30 July 1995 called for both sides "to pull back 2-4 kilometers from each other," for the gradual reduction of Russian forces in Chechnya (down to two brigades), for the scheduled disarmament of Chechen forces, and for the exchange of prisoners.<sup>82</sup> Unfortunately, the agreement and cease-fire began to disintegrate within weeks. Russia had begun protracted withdrawals of troops, but progress stalled due to the reluctance of Chechen forces to surrender their weapons and Dudayev's refusal to extradite Basayev to Russia to face criminal charges in connection with Budennovsk. In August 1995, Dudayev

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<sup>82</sup> Lieven, 136; and Diane Curran, Fiona Hill, and Elena Kostitsyna, *The Search For Peace in Chechnya: A Sourcebook 1994-1996* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University, March 1997), 11. For the full accord, available only in Russian, see Curran, 174-175.

disavowed the post-Budennovsk agreements made with Russia less than a month earlier.<sup>83</sup>

Basayev quickly followed these events with threats of future terrorist attacks against Russian non-combatant targets, only this time much closer to the heart of mother Russia. During an interview on Polish radio, on 21 October 1995, Basayev said:

If war operations begin again, if the Russian side uses force to put pressure on Chechnya, I have said unambiguously and I repeat once again: we do not intend to fight longer on our own territory. It's enough. After all, only the mountains remain untouched here. I have radioactive material. This is a good weapon. I will spray it anywhere in the centre of Moscow and to the glory of God I will turn that city into an eternal desert. That can be done. With this, everything we have experienced, everything they have done here, can be revenged. If the Russians lengthen this war, we will have to resort to what I have been speaking of.<sup>84</sup>

#### **D. BASAYEV'S GIFT TO MOSCOW**

On 8 November 1995, in a taped news conference in Chechnya, Basayev told Moscow reporter Yelena Masyuk that he had a "gift" or "present" for Moscow of some radioactive material.<sup>85</sup> The television executives back in Moscow would not report the

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<sup>83</sup> "Reactions to Agreements: Dudayev," paragraph 2; and "Dudayev Appears on Television in Chechnya," paragraph 3.

<sup>84</sup> "Chechen Leader Basayev's Threat To Turn Moscow into Desert" (British Broadcasting Corporation), 23 October 1995, 2 paragraphs, paragraph 2.

<sup>85</sup> Primary sources for this section include "Izmailovsky Radioactive Container Story Eyed," *Moskovskiy Novosti* (Moscow), 24-31 December 1995, FBIS-SOV-96-015-S, 13 paragraphs; Andrew and Leslie Cockburn, *One Point Safe* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 220-222; and "Chechen Rebels Must Be Treated Seriously," *Xinhua News Agency*, 26 November 1995, 1 paragraph. See also "Radioactive Object Found in Moscow's Izmailovo Park," *Xinhua News Agency*, 24 November 1995, 1 paragraph; Brian Killen, "Moscow Radioactive Parcel Harmless, Officials Say," (Reuter News Service - CIS and Eastern Europe), 24 November 1995, 19 paragraphs; Phil Reeves, "Nuclear Stunt Strikes Fear in Heart of Russia," *The Independent* (London), 25 November 1995, 8 paragraphs; and "Chechen Leader Basayev's Threat," (British Broadcasting Corporation), 23 October 1995, 2 paragraphs.

threat for lack of confirmation, so Masyuk returned to Chechnya and Basayev. This time, he told her that a radioactive container had been flown into Moscow by "friends" and placed in the Izmailovsky Park, and he provided her with directions to the container.

Izmailovsky Park, a former summer residence for the czars, consists of three thousand acres that now house designated areas for public use that include an open-air theater, fairgrounds, and a popular flea market.<sup>86</sup>

When Masyuk returned to the park on 13 November, she and a friend looked around the park themselves, not finding anything. After searching for the package herself, Masyuk notified authorities in the Federal Security Bureau (FSB).

Basayev's "people" could not believe that the container had not been found. Some Chechens told Masyuk that Basayev was suspicious of her trustworthiness and that he suspected she had found the container, turned it over to Russian authorities, and failed to report it in the news. It was rumored that some Chechens were making threats against her.

Masyuk returned to the park on 23 November, "followed Basayev's plan precisely," and found the container buried under a thin covering of snow. It was in a 32-kilogram case, or bag, and wrapped in plastic. Accounts of the package's radioactivity vary, but all indicate that the emissions well exceeded normal, acceptable levels.<sup>87</sup>

It turned out that the container held Cesium 137, which is used in cancer research and therapy. Russian officials reported that the material posed no threat to the general

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<sup>86</sup> Cockburn, 221.

<sup>87</sup> "Chechen Rebels Must Be Treated Seriously," paragraph 1; Cockburn, 221; "Radioactive Object Found in Izmailovo Park," paragraph 1; and Reeves, paragraph 3.



public because an individual would have to come within one meter of the package to become exposed to potentially harmful levels of radiation.<sup>88</sup>

It is not clear if the authorities notified by Masyuk on 13 November ever looked for the "present." The container apparently sat covered by snow in the public park for two to three weeks.

The Russian populace was not easily soothed by news from the Kremlin that the package was harmless, and events that seemed a recreation of Budennovsk just a few weeks later continued to drive public opinion against a continuation of war with Chechnya.

#### **E. KIZLYAR AND PERVOMAYSKOYE**

Kizlyar is a Russian town in Dagestan ten miles from the Chechen border.<sup>89</sup> It has a population of approximately fifty thousand. In the early morning hours of 9 January 1996, in what was "almost an exact replica of the June raid on Budennovsk," 256 Chechen fighters raided the town.<sup>90</sup> This time Chechen Commander Salman Raduyev, a

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<sup>88</sup> "Radioactive Object found in Izmailovo Park," paragraph 1; and Killen, paragraph 6.

<sup>89</sup> Primary sources for this section include Lyudmila Leontyeva, "Kizlyar, January 9," *Moscow News*, 12 January 1996, 9 paragraphs; "Chronology of Key Events In Chechnya Hostage Drama," Reuters (Moscow), 16 January 1996, 38 paragraphs; James Meek, "Nobody Gets Out Alive," *The Guardian*, 10 January 1996, 13 paragraphs; Phil Reeves, "Chechen Rebels Try to Reclaim Grozny," *The Independent* (London), 7 March 1996, 6 paragraphs; Brent Sadler, "Chechen Rebels Survive, Prolong Hostage Crisis" (CNN World News), 24 January 1996, 16 paragraphs; Michael Specter, "Siege In The Caucasus" (New York Times News Service), 22 January 1996, 56 paragraphs; and "Chechen Surprise: Repetition," *The Associated Press, Special Report No 11*, 10 January 1996, 26 paragraphs. See also "Chechen Rebels Release 46 Dagestan Hostages" (British Broadcasting Corporation), 26 January 1996, 6 paragraphs; "Chechen Rebels Pledge to Release Dagestan Hostages Without Preconditions" (British Broadcasting Corporation), 25 January 1996, 11 paragraphs; and M. A. Smith, *A Chronology of the Chechen Conflict*, Part 3 (Sandhurst, England: Conflict Studies Research Center, July 1996).

<sup>90</sup> Leontyeva, paragraph 7. Also see Lieven, 137.

relative of President Dudayev, led the raid.<sup>91</sup>

As in Budennovsk, the Chechen fighters entered the town in trucks, dismounted and moved in teams to predetermined locations throughout the town.<sup>92</sup> Raduyev and his men destroyed two helicopters and a landing pad at the Kizlyar airfield before seizing the town hospital. By daybreak, the Chechens had forced hundreds of civilians out of nearby apartments and were holding as many as 2,000 hostages in the hospital. As did Basayev in Budennovsk, Raduyev used the hostages as human shields, threatened to kill hostages if any of his men were shot, and demanded the withdrawal of all Russian troops from Chechnya.

From interviews with hostages, the New York News Service provided this account of the Kizlyar raid:

By 6:30 the rebels had herded scores of people into [the] hospital while many of their group battled in the frigid streets near the railroad station. Initial casualties were heavy, especially after a skirmish at a local army outpost, with at least 43 people on both sides dying that first day.

By 8:30 the Chechens had seized the maternity department of the hospital and an apartment house next to it where employees live. Nurses crowded around women who were giving birth, trying to protect them. Many hostages were immediately pushed into windows to act as shields. Many of them ripped their own white bed sheets and waved them furiously, hoping that the Russian troops would hold their fire.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Lieven, 138; Meek, paragraph 11; Specter, paragraph 9; and "Chechen Surprise: Repetition," paragraph 9. Some sources refer to Raduyev as Dudayev's son-in-law and others say that he is married to Dudayev's niece.

<sup>92</sup> "Chechen Surprise: Repetition," paragraphs 9-11.

<sup>93</sup> Specter, paragraphs 22-23.

In addition to twenty-five Russian citizens that were killed in the initial raid, Chechen gunmen killed two of the hostages they were holding in the hospital on 9 January.<sup>94</sup>

After spending one night in the hospital, Raduyev piled into buses with 165 hostages and started toward the Chechen border. Their path was halted when helicopter fire heavily damaged a bridge in their path near the town of Pervomayskoye. The Chechens managed to take another 100 civilians and 37 militiamen hostage and moved into buildings within the town.

Although Raduyev did release a small number of women hostages, negotiations over the next four days showed little progress toward resolving the standoff. Chechen President Dudayev acknowledged ordering the raid; Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdin vowed this time “to punish the Chechen ‘bandits.’”<sup>95</sup> Russian security chief Mikhail Barsukov offered the Chechens safe passage home in exchange for the release of all remaining hostages and the surrender of all weapons. Raduyev, not surprisingly, refused to release the hostages, surrender his weapons, or accept safe passage unless provided with volunteer hostages from among journalists and local politicians. Throughout these four days Russian officials set deadlines by which they demanded Raduyev release hostages, and each time Raduyev responded by opening fire on Russian troops. Four Russians were wounded in these exchanges.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Lieven, 137; “Chronology of Key Events,” paragraph 8; and Meek, paragraph 3.

<sup>95</sup> “Chronology of Key Events,” paragraph 12.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., paragraph 27.

Russian forces began to attack Chechen positions on 15 January. The fighting intensified the following day as Russian forces began clearing the town house by house. By 18 January, twenty-three hostages had been freed and the Chechens were completely surrounded by Russian forces and specialized antiterrorist units.

Chechen reinforcements, sent by Dudayev, arrived on the 18<sup>th</sup> and attempted to break through the perimeter. They were beaten back, but managed to aid a number of the Chechen fighters, to include Rudayev, in escaping.<sup>97</sup>

In the fighting, the town of Pervomayskoye was decimated. As justification for the heavy assault and vast destruction of Pervomayskoye, Russian Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov cited intercepted communications between Raduyev and Grozny that discussed plans to begin killing hostages. That the Chechens possessed the ability to communicate with Grozny throughout the standoff was confirmed later in hostage interviews. According to hostage accounts, the Chechens conducted communications over radio and satellite telephone, and were capable of intercepting Russian radio communications.<sup>98</sup> The timely arrival of Chechen reinforcements and Raduyev's escape were likely aided by these capabilities.

The standoff was over by the morning on 19 January. As many as 150 Chechen fighters were killed and Russian authorities captured another thirty. Forty hostages were killed in the ordeal.

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<sup>97</sup> Sadler, paragraph 8; and Smith, Part 3, 5-6.

<sup>98</sup> Specter, paragraphs 39-40.

Dudayev's dispatch of reinforcements to Pervomayskoye was not the only Chechen effort to aid Raduyev. Basayev launched a new attack on Grozny on 14 January during which twenty-nine Russians were taken hostage from a nearby power station, and "friends" of Basayev hijacked a Turkish ferry in the Black Sea on 16 January. In both of these instances, the hostages were held under the demand that Raduyev and his men be allowed to leave Pervomayskoye with their hostages.

Raduyev and the other Chechens that managed to escape on 19 January 1996 took with them 60 hostages. Those hostages were held in Novogrozny, Chechnya, along with the twenty-nine hostages taken from the power station. In interviews held in Novogrozny in the days following Pervomayskoye, Raduyev and Shamil Basayev said that they would exchange the civilian hostages for the Chechen fighters captured in Pervomayskoye. Some of the hostages were even presented to the visiting journalists and made positive statements about their Chechen captors and the treatment they were receiving.<sup>99</sup> Of course, those statements in all probability were coerced.

On 23 January 1996, Chechnya's Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Aslan Maskhadov, clarified that all the Dagestani hostages would be released without conditions. They were released over the next two days.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Sadler, paragraphs 1, 9-11.

<sup>100</sup> "Chechen Rebels Release 46," paragraph 1; and "Chechen Rebels Pledge to Release Dagestan hostages," paragraphs 1, 3 and 10.

## F. THE HIJACKING OF A TURKISH FERRY

Late at night on 16 January 1996, while Raduyev and federal troops were at a standoff in Pervomayskoye, seven heavily-armed Chechen sympathizers with TNT strapped to their bodies hijacked the Turkish ferry *Avrazya* in the Black Sea port of Trabzon, taking 151 passengers (mostly Russians) and 40 crew members hostage.<sup>101</sup> The port facility's police chief was wounded trying to deter the hijackers.

All seven hijackers were Turks who had ties to Abkazia and Chechnya. The leader, Muhammad Toksan, is of Abkaz descent and fought with Shamil Basayev in Abkazia, and possibly in Chechnya.<sup>102</sup> It was reported later that the ferry captain had also fought with Basayev in Abkazia and may have conspired with the hijackers.<sup>103</sup>

Under threats that the Russian passengers would be shot or that the ship would be blown up, the hijackers demanded that the Chechen fighters in Pervomayskoye be permitted safe return to Chechnya and that Russian forces be withdrawn from the region.

Throughout the seventy-two hour ordeal, the ferry traveled west toward Istanbul and anchored off shore, flanked by Turkish coast guard vessels at all times. Muhammad maintained constant communications with Turkish negotiators and the Turkish media.

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<sup>101</sup> Primary sources for the ferry hijacking section include Stephen Kinzer, "72 Hour Hostage Crisis On the Black Sea Ends Without Bloodshed" (New York Times News Service), 20 January 1996, 31 paragraphs; "Chechen-Seized Ferry Leaves Turkish Port: Destination Unknown," ITAR-TASS (Moscow), 17 January 1996, FBIS-SOV-96-011, 13 paragraphs; "Government Spokesman Sees Abkhaz Link to Ferry Hijack," Paris AFP, 17 January 1996, FBIS-SOV-96-012, 12 paragraphs; and "Basayev, Others View Outcome of Raduyev Operation," *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (Moscow), 31 January 1996, FBIS-SOV-96-022, 11 paragraphs. See also "Tbilisi-based Abkhaz Parliament: Terrorists on Hijacked Turkish Ferry," *Iprinda News Agency* (Tbilisi, Georgia), 19 January 1996, 3 paragraph; and Smith, Part 3.

<sup>102</sup> Kinzer, paragraph 22; and "Government Spokesman Sees Abkaz Link," paragraph 7.

<sup>103</sup> "Tbilisi-based Abkhaz Parliament: Terrorists," paragraph 2; and "Ferry Hijackers in Collusion With Crew," *Iprinda* (Tbilisi, Georgia), 17 January 1996, 2 paragraphs, paragraph 1.

One television reporter was even transported onto the ferry and spent 24 hours conducting interviews. During interviews, Muhammad described himself and his men as loyal "Chechen resistance fighters."<sup>104</sup>

Muhammad was very pleased with the extensive media coverage his operation received and the public reaction it generated.<sup>105</sup> Hundreds of demonstrators, some of whom had traveled for hours, gathered in Istanbul in clear view of the anchored ferry. Comprised of people from the Caucasus, Muslim Turks and other sympathizers, the crowds chanted pro-Chechen, anti-Russian slogans, waved signs and Chechen flags, and "encouraged the hijackers not to surrender."<sup>106</sup> The hijackers responded to their supporters with flashlights and by maneuvering the ferry.

On 19 January, satisfied by the media coverage and the crowds of Chechen supporters, the hijackers surrendered to Turkish officials and the hostages were released.

Basayev himself later admitted, in an interview with a correspondent from the Moscow *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, his involvement in planning the hijacking operation and his seeming regret that the hijackers surrendered so easily. Basayev said:

Three of the group who seized the ship are old friends of mine, we fought together in Abkhazia. Not so long ago they were my guests. And we discussed a plan to seize a ship. But I don't know why they gave themselves up without taking the matter to its conclusion.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Kinzer, paragraphs 8 and 17.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., paragraphs 25-31.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., paragraph 29.

<sup>107</sup> "Basayev, Others View Outcome," paragraph 5.

## G. RUSSIA TRIES BUT CANNOT RECOVER

The raid on Budennovsk in June 1995 capitalized on the political vulnerabilities of Moscow, generated tremendous fear among Russian citizens, and eliminated popular support for Russia's war effort. The placement of a radioactive package in the heart of Moscow, the raid on Kizlyar and its aftermath in Pervomayskoye, and the hijacking of a Turkish ferry which occurred in rapid succession after Budennovsk, between November 1995 and late January 1996, further heightened anxieties and stymied the Russian war effort. The Russian army was unable to recover the tactical momentum that it had enjoyed in early June 1995.

Russian units lost ground and lost heart in those seven months, mid-June 1995 through late January 1996. Chechen citizens on the other hand, bolstered by the recent military successes, achieved renewed confidence. From the time of Budennovsk until the last Russian troops left Chechnya in January 1997, separatist demonstrations grew ever more common in Grozny. To offer an example from Lieven:

On Chechen Independence Day, 6 September 1995, some 3,000 Chechens gathered in the square before the site of the former presidential headquarters, carrying placards denouncing Russia and supporting Dudayev. Almost every day during the talks in the OSCE compound in Grozny, Russian generals had to run the gauntlet of booing and chanting demonstrators. For reasons that are not clear, the Russian Army made very little attempt to stop these rallies or arrest those responsible.<sup>108</sup>

Also during that period, Chechen fighters, aided by townspeople, had easily re-infiltrated most Chechen towns by carefully avoiding Russian posts on the periphery. Once inside, they were able to move about quite freely, staying out of sight during

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<sup>108</sup> Lieven, 135.



routine street patrols by Russian troops. By March 1996, Chechen forces had regained control of some towns and were launching preemptive assaults to reclaim parts of the capital city.

Moreover, the problems that had plagued Russian forces all along – combat inexperience, ineffective leadership, inability to resupply combat units, and poor morale – were now magnified under the lens of Moscow's political instability, indecisiveness, and gamesmanship. Russian presidential elections were scheduled for 16 June 1996 and President Yeltsin had good reason to be concerned.

Russian opinion polls in March and April 1996 showed that fifty-two percent of Russians favored "an unconditional pull-out of Russian forces from Chechnya," and fifty-seven percent favored "direct talks between Yeltsin and Dudayev."<sup>109</sup> Yeltsin desperately needed to convince the Russian public that he was seriously seeking an end to the war in Chechnya.

In March, Yeltsin announced another cease-fire and offered to talk with Dudayev and seek a resolution to the conflict. Dudayev was conscious of Yeltsin's political motives and his pre-election vulnerabilities, and he had seen the tactical advantage swing back in Chechnya's direction. A temporary peace had no allure for Dudayev who could clearly see Chechnya's opportunity for a total victory. Instead of accepting Yeltsin's offer, Dudayev capitalized on the situation. In late March and through mid-April 1996, Chechen forces conducted a number of highly successful assaults and ambushes against Russian forces in and around Vedenov and Shatoy.

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 139-140.

At this point, it seemed that something very dramatic would need to happen for Yeltsin to show progress in Chechnya or win re-election. Dudayev's death served both ends.

### **1. Dudayev Is Killed and Yandarbiyev Succeeds the Presidency**

Russia would, of course, have welcomed Dudayev's demise at any time during the war, but his death could not have come at a better time for Yeltsin. His re-election hopes depended on a concerted peace initiative in Chechnya and Dudayev was an obstinate barrier. So, when Chechen leaders, in late April 1996, confirmed that Jokhar Dudayev was dead, both President Yeltsin and Russian morale received a much-needed boost.

Dudayev was killed on or about 22 April in the village of Gekhi-chu (near Grozny) by rocket fire from Russian aircraft that had apparently targeted his satellite telephone transmissions. Reportedly, Dudayev was in conversation with Russian negotiators when the attack took place.<sup>110</sup>

Whether or not Dudayev had personally ordered the use of terrorism is unclear, but his knowledge in advance of the operations was certain. Members of his personal staff participated in the raid on Budennovsk, and Raduyev surely would have told his relative and mentor about the plans for Kizlyar. Even if Dudayev did not order any of the attacks, he certainly helped perpetuate them by his formal support to and protection of the terrorists under his charge. Additionally, it is worth noting that Chechen combatants did

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<sup>110</sup> Curran, 29-30.

not resume terrorist attacks after his death even when Moscow reneged a subsequent cease-fire agreement and stepped up its attacks on Chechen positions in July 1996.

Although it was certainly a blow to Chechnya, Dudayev's death most assuredly contributed to the eventual peace. Chechen Vice-President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev succeeded him. It is very unlikely that Dudayev, who was known to be irascible, ill tempered and unpredictable, would have agreed to a cease-fire before Russian elections as Yandarbiyev did.<sup>111</sup> In fact, on 1 May 1996, Yandarbiyev made the offer to renew peace negotiations with Moscow, under OSCE mediation.

A three-day cease-fire began in late May during which Yandarbiyev traveled to Moscow and met with Yeltsin. Though their meeting was less than cordial, a new agreement was signed that extended the cease-fire and promoted continued peace efforts. On 28 May, Yeltsin for the first time during the war visited the Russian controlled airfield near Grozny. It was quite obviously a political gesture and Yeltsin returned to Moscow after only a few hours in Chechnya.<sup>112</sup>

In less than two weeks, the OSCE had brokered a peace agreement between the two sides and Yeltsin was able to tell the Russian voters that Russian troop withdrawals from Chechnya would begin on 25 June 1996. The agreement signed in the Ingushetian town of Nazran on 10 June, outlined a cease-fire, demilitarization, the formation of joint groups for policing and monitoring operations, and the withdrawal of Russian forces by the end of August.

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<sup>111</sup> Lieven, 143 characterizes Dudayev as "histrionic, capricious and arrogant." Kline, paragraph 41 describes Dudayev as "erratic and quarrelsome."

<sup>112</sup> Pavel Baev, *Russia's Policies in the Caucasus* (UK: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997), 55; and Lieven, 141.

## 2. Russia's Final Effort and Chechnya's Response

Dudayev's death, the successful cease-fire and Yeltsin's promise to the Russian people of peace in Chechnya were enough to tip the electoral scales in Yeltsin's favor and win him re-election. Despite strong public and parliamentary support for ending the war, political necessity and popular opinion were no longer immediate concerns for Yeltsin. Citing violations of the cease-fire agreement by Chechen forces, Moscow ordered the resumption of large-scale attacks against Chechen positions virtually as soon as the ballots were tabulated in early July 1996.<sup>113</sup>

Russian forces, however, had been unable to recover from the previous year of dramatic setbacks and humiliation. Their defeat began when Budennovsk stripped their momentum and the ensuing year had crippled their ability and willingness to fight on. Russia was beaten.

Timed to coincide with Yeltsin's inaugural celebration, Chechen forces massed for the largest Chechen offensive of the war. On 6 August 1996, Chechen forces simultaneously assaulted the Russian occupied towns of Gudermes, Argun, and Grozny. As described by Anatol Lieven in his recently published book, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, the Chechen victory was quick and decisive.

By the evening of the second day, most of the Russian forces around Grozny were back to the positions they had occupied before the first Russian assault in December 1994, twenty months before. The Chechens also occupied the centres of Gudermes and Argun. Some 494 Russian soldiers were killed in the August battle in Grozny alone, with 1,407 wounded and 182 missing or captured – figures which recall the worst days of the initial storm in January 1995. Eighteen tanks and 69 armoured personnel carriers were destroyed or captured. This very signal

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<sup>113</sup> Timothy Heritage, "Russians Pound Chechen Village in Renewed Fighting" (Reuters, 21 July 1996), 17 paragraphs, paragraph 2; Curran, 42; and Lieven, 141.

defeat presented Russians with the choice of either starting the whole war over again, beginning with a new and bloody storm of Grozny, or of effectively surrendering in return for peace.<sup>114</sup>

Nearly all Russians, to include most government officials, were unwilling to relive the events of the war, the last 14 months especially, and were ready for peace at any cost.

### **3. Alexander Lebed Negotiates an End to the Chechen War**

Shortly after finishing third in the first round of the Russian presidential elections, Alexander Lebed, a retired Soviet Army General, was appointed by Yeltsin as Security Council Secretary and National Security Aide on 18 June 1996. Lebed immediately vowed to “personally take charge of the Chechen peace negotiations.”<sup>115</sup> Lebed was outspoken in his opposition of the war from the very beginning and his presidential campaign slogan was, “Others start wars, he ends them.”<sup>116</sup>

On 10 August, Lebed took over as Presidential Envoy to Chechnya and two days later met with Chechen Chief of Staff Aslan Maskhadov in the Dagestan town of Novye Atagi. Lebed and Maskhadov, also retired from the Soviet Army (as a Colonel), established a good rapport from their very first meeting and immediately agreed to a period of cease-fire to manage the dead and wounded and permit relief to civilians. The two men met several times over the next two weeks to work out the specifics of a final peace agreement.

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<sup>114</sup> Lieven, 142.

<sup>115</sup> Curran, 41.

<sup>116</sup> Lieven, 142-143.

Yeltsin's vocal disapproval of Lebed and an unfulfilled threat by the Russian military commander, General Pulikovsky, to renew bombardments on Grozny remarkably did not derail peace efforts this time.<sup>117</sup> In actuality, those actions may have hastened the negotiators toward a peace settlement. Lebed and Maskhadov quickly signed an interim agreement, "On Urgent Measures to Stop Fire and Combat Operations in the City of Grozny and on the Territory of Chechnya," on 22 August.<sup>118</sup> It was followed nine days later by the signing of the "Russian-Chechen Truce Agreement: Principles for Determining the Fundamentals of Relations Between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic." The final peace accord was signed on 31 August 1996 in Khasavyurt, Dagestan.<sup>119</sup>

The Truce Agreement called for establishment of a joint commission and re-validated the Nazran agreement, but delayed determination of Chechnya's independence for five years. The actual statement on the political status of Chechnya is contained in paragraph 1 of the Agreement and reads as follows:

The treaty regulating the basis fundamentals of relations between the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic, to be governed by the universally accepted principles and norms of the international law, shall have been reached prior to 31 December, 2001.<sup>120</sup>

The war was over, and if Russian officials were reluctant to acknowledge

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<sup>117</sup> Bill Powell, "Someone's Finally in Charge," *Newsweek*, 2 September 1996, 6 paragraphs, paragraphs 2 and 4; Baev, 55; and Curran, 47.

<sup>118</sup> Curran, 207; for complete document (English translation).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 208; for complete document (English translation). The date on the Truce Agreement is 25 August 1996; sources vary as to actual signing date.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

that Chechnya had won the war, they could not deny Russia's resounding defeat. Pavel Baev succinctly summarized the atmosphere in Moscow in his book, *Russia's Policies in the Caucasus*.

The peace accord [Lebed] struck on 30 August was in fact a plain recognition of Russia's military and political defeat. Few in the Russian leadership showed any enthusiasm about this 'capitulation', but the alternative – renewal of military operations – was clearly unacceptable, so the accord was officially confirmed.<sup>121</sup>

Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdin and Chechen President Yandarbiyev meet in Moscow in early October to sign a joint declaration consolidating the agreements made previously by Lebed and Maskhadov. Yet the issue of whether or not Russia would maintain some military presence in Chechnya lingered until November when it was agreed that all Russian troops would be out of Chechnya on or before 20 January 1997.

The peace in Chechnya did not bely Yeltsin's displeasure with and resentment for Lebed. Yeltsin fired him on 17 October 1996. Two days later, Yandarbiyev appointed Maskhadov as Prime Minister of Chechnya. Today, Maskhadov is the President of Chechnya and Shamil Basayev, the terrorist, is his Prime Minister.

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<sup>121</sup> Baev, 55.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

In their recently published book, Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal recount this story of a disoriented elderly Dagestani woman who encountered Shamil Basayev during the initial raid on Budennovsk.

The Chechens formed a huge column of hundreds of people along the street, urging them along at gunpoint, shooting over their heads to force back the Russian police. In a moment of black comedy, Basayev remembers an old woman stepping out of her gate staring around at the commotion. 'There's one old granny in a house on the way to the hospital. People are aware of what's going on, they all are crouching down, fighting is going on, the Russians are shooting and we are shooting, and the old woman comes out on to the street, and stands there, and I say, "Grandma, stop, come over here." She says, "Little son, what's going on, are you making a movie?" I say, "Yes, yes we are filming, Grandma, it's a war," and she comes quickly over.'<sup>122</sup>

Presumably, "Grandma" became one of Basayev's more than 1,500 hostages. That is where the story ends. What happened to Grandma is unclear; she is but an amusing memory for a terrorist. Hopefully, she is today safe in her Budennovsk home trying still to forget the ordeal or telling stories of it herself. If the latter is true, her stories in all likelihood are not amusing. Of course, she could have been one of the more than 150 Russian citizens killed in Budennovsk. In the eyes of Basayev, that would be justifiable.

When you combine a callous disregard for generally accepted customs and humanitarian laws and the calculated ruthlessness of a terrorist with the warfighting talents of a skillful, brave, and seasoned military commander, you have Shamil Basayev. The contradictions in such a personality are paradoxical. On the one hand, honorable and

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<sup>122</sup> Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998), 258.



on the other, despicable. The military commander is obligated to protect noncombatants inasmuch as war will allow. The terrorist is targeting the very same noncombatants (to include disoriented old ladies).

Terrorism has achieved honored status in Chechnya time and time again since June 1995: when Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin negotiated on live television with Basayev and agreed to nearly all of his demands; when Basayev and his fighters returned home to Chechnya and a hero's welcome; when Dudayev heralded and rewarded participants of the Budennovsk operation; when Russia conceded defeat; and when Basayev became the Chechen Prime Minister earlier this year. It achieved honored status among Chechens, among Muslims, and among some less likely candidates.

Anatol Lieven, the London reporter who frequently interviewed Basayev and was on occasion a personal guest of his, acknowledges the hostage raid on Budennovsk as "obviously an act of terrorism by the usual definition," then goes on to say that it was also "an act of enormous daring."<sup>123</sup> In the introduction of his book, he admits to having formed a "deep admiration" for the Chechens and expresses his desire to honor their "courage and tenacity" while maintaining "due scholarly and journalistic objectivity."<sup>124</sup> Raymond Finch, a United States Army officer writing for the Foreign Military Studies Office in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, is certainly conscious of the significant implications of the Chechen war, but he is reluctant to call Basayev a terrorist (attributing such appraisals wholly to the Russians) and his articles tend to glamorize Basayev. Though he

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<sup>123</sup> Lieven, 125.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 5.

tries to quantify this perception, it seems clear that Finch, too, has developed admiration for Basayev. The following comment was footnoted in one of Finch's articles:

This article's intent is not to romanticize Shamil Basayev's martial exploits. His methods are cruel and vicious and often violate recognized laws of warfare. However, he should not be demonized. When cast in the light of Chechen independence, his actions are courageous and praiseworthy.<sup>125</sup>

As discussed in the introduction, these kinds of mixed appraisals are not uncommon "when actors do not use terrorism exclusively."<sup>126</sup> Audiences can react to discriminate use of terrorism with "both admiration for its daring and revulsion at its cruelty."<sup>127</sup> The campaign of terror employed by Chechen combatants, though unrelenting for seven months, can be considered discriminate because Chechnya did not resort to terrorism until the situation was desperate in June 1995. Then later when the Russian army was no longer capable of regaining the upper hand, Chechnya abandoned terrorism and resumed conventional tactics in the final months of the war.

In cases where terrorism is used discriminately and camouflaged by war, it is not hard to image how those people that the terrorist represents and even some onlookers can become enamoured with a character like Shamil Basayev. Neither is it very surprising, albeit somewhat disappointing by implication, that Basayev has risen to such prominence as a result of the planning, execution and orchestration of terrorism. "To engage in warfare is a justification for terrorism as well as a claim to powerful status."<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Finch, "A Face of Future Battle," 41, n 6.

<sup>126</sup> Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context*, 12.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 11.

Whatever the justification, terrorism can be quite easily distinguished from acts of warfare; terrorism does not resemble war. "Targets of military or defensive value to the enemy are rarely the targets of terrorism; to the contrary, terrorists seem to prefer noncombatants."<sup>129</sup> Shamil Basayev avoided or circumvented by bribe or cunning numerous military targets along the way to Budennovsk. He was not looking for an unsuspecting military target. Basayev was on a terrorist mission; he was looking for noncombatants. Budennovsk in no way could be construed as a military target.

A perceptive reporter once posed the difficult question of perceptions on terrorism to Emil Pain, former head of the Russian Federation's Working Group for Ending Hostilities and Settling the Situation in the Chechen Republic. Here is the question and Pain's answer:

Everyone condemns terrorism, but people can interpret the same act and many different phenomena in different ways – some as an act of terrorism, others as a heroic act carried out for the good of their people. How do we tackle this?

Political terrorism always hides behind slogans about protecting the interests of its people or downtrodden social group. And in that sense there is no difference between the IRA, the Palestinian Hamas, or the Chechen gunman. Just as there is no difference in that they almost always represent a political minority. . . . Political demagoguery about the "good of the people" and the "freedom struggle" cannot overshadow the fact that terrorism is one of the most deformed phenomena of modern times. The deliberate use of force against unarmed civilians to resolve political tasks – that is what distinguishes terrorism from other crimes. Under the laws of any country this evil undertaking is punished more severely than other crimes – even those which result in a greater number of casualties.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> "Emil Pain Remarks on Cairo Summit, Terrorism in Chechnya," *Rossiyskiye Vesti* (Moscow), 14 March 1996, FBIS-SOV-96-051, 15 paragraphs, paragraphs 6 and 7.

In the case of Chechnya, however, terrorism was not punished; it was rewarded, and the terrorists garnered power from their exploits. The implications of this very prominent aspect of the Chechen war lay in the “self-perpetuating dynamic” of terrorism.<sup>131</sup>

#### **A. WHY DID CHECHNYA RESORT TO TERROR AS A TACTIC OF WAR?**

Chechens are often referenced in connection with ‘bandit traditions’ and a ‘raiding heritage’ (recall the quote from Solzhenitsyn in the historical background section of Chapter II). Substantial evidence does exist to support the assertion that thievery and raiding have historically been part of the Chechen landscape. Raiding was once the accepted means for young Chechen men to find a wife and obtain property, and Chechens will generally speak very freely and frankly about their criminal activities, “for there is no implication of guilt or apology.”<sup>132</sup>

That heritage and those traditions had manifested themselves in modern Chechnya before the war, in organized crime and “brigandage pure and simple.”<sup>133</sup> The collapse of the Soviet Union and the Chechen revolution of 1991 only increased the opportunities for criminals in Chechnya, as in all parts of the former Soviet Union.<sup>134</sup> Dudayev and Basayev both made good use of criminals in their government capacities, and both certainly profited individually from the criminal climate in Chechnya before the war.

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<sup>131</sup> Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context*, 19.

<sup>132</sup> Lieven, 351-353.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

Maskhadov tries to dispel the notion that Chechens are bandits and, ironically, Basayev today uses that very term to describe the Chechen kidnapping rings operating in the North Caucasus region. However, Chechen culture must be considered a contributing factor in Chechnya's acceptance of terrorism as a means of achieving independence, even if it was not the critical variable in Chechnya's decision to employ terrorism. Shamil Basayev has to be considered the key variable when evaluating Chechnya's use of terrorism during the war. Without denying his demonstrated warfighting capabilities, remember that Basayev showed his talents for terrorism before he became a warfighter; remember Minvody. It cannot be said with certainty, but it is unlikely that Dudayev, Maskhadov, or Raduyev would have initiated terrorism on their own.

Dudayev was actively soliciting international recognition and intervention, the hopes of which were lost following the first terrorist action at Budennovsk. Maskhadov most certainly would not have turned to terrorism; he seems too noble. And Kizlyar was virtually a carbon copy of Budennovsk; it is unlikely that Raduyev would have conceived of such a large-scale terrorist operation on his own.

The success of Budennovsk coupled with the tolerance for criminality inherent in the Chechen culture set a climate that fostered the seven-month campaign that followed. Of course, Basayev personally planned and directed all of the terrorist activities during that period, with the possible exception of the raid on Kizlyar.

## **B. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CHECHNYA AND FOR FUTURE WARFARE?**

### **1. The Implications for Chechnya**

Shortly after Budennovsk, while still reeling from his success, Basayev made this statement:

The main thing is that I'd opened the bottle and let the genie out. People won't need me now, they know what to do. People have now got the taste of it. They understand that it is better to have a war in Russia than at home in Chechnya.<sup>135</sup>

Basayev was referring to other Chechen commanders and fighters when he made this comment, but more than they had gotten 'a taste of it.' Chechnya is living with what it wrought. Dudayev's government came to power by force and was funded through the sale of weapons seized from Russian arms depots, drug trafficking, and robbery. Basayev speaks freely of his participation in all of these exploits as a means of funding the travel, expenses, and training of his military units. Before the war, after Basayev stopped the casual and uncontrolled raiding of Chechen railways, his own fighters began systematically raiding trains filled with foreign passengers transiting through Chechnya.

Today Chechnya is overflowing with terrorism and crime.<sup>136</sup> Kidnappings, some politically motivated but most prompted purely by the prospect of ransoms, are a near daily occurrence in Chechnya. The situation is out of control. All international humanitarian groups have abandoned Chechnya because of attacks against aid workers.

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<sup>135</sup> "Basayev Surprised by Chernomyrdin's Handling of Budennovsk," *Moscow NTV*, 26 June 1995, FBIS-SOV-95-123, 19 paragraphs, paragraph 12.

<sup>136</sup> For crime statistics see "Chechnya Situation Report 01-30 Apr 1997," UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 30 April 1997, 29 paragraphs; "Red Cross Killing Seen as Pursuing Unclear Long-Term Goals," *Segodnya* (Moscow), 18 December 1996, 5 paragraphs; Carlotta Gall, "Game of Human Pawns," *The Moscow Times*, 7 March, 1998, 40 paragraphs.

In the most serious incident, in December 1996, six of the fifteen Red Cross workers stationed in Novye Atagi were killed, assassination style, while they slept.<sup>137</sup>

Understandably, the Red Cross pulled its remaining workers out of Chechnya the following day. Firefights with Russian guards along the border are common, as are indiscriminate bombings throughout the region.<sup>138</sup> Hundreds of people have been kidnapped in Chechnya since the end of the war to include foreign aid workers and journalists for whom the captors have netted "an estimated \$20 million."<sup>139</sup> Both Maskhadov and Basayev acknowledge that the crime, and the kidnappings in particular, cast Chechnya in a bad light internationally and hamper the potential for foreign investments. Basayev, now the Prime Minister, has taken on the task of curtailing crime and putting a stop to terrorism. Of course, it is almost perverse that Chechnya's anti-terrorist unit reports to Basayev and is filled with former members of his command, many of whom are, like Basayev, still wanted by Russia on charges of hostage taking during the war.<sup>140</sup>

Today, Chechnya has its independence, essentially. It does not participate in the Russian government; its two parliamentary seats remain vacant. In fact, Chechnya does not recognize Moscow at all, except when it serves Chechen ends (as in the establishment of trade and oil transit agreements), and Moscow is in no position to do much about the situation. Whether or not Maskhadov and Basayev can effect controls in Chechnya

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<sup>137</sup> "Red Cross Killing," paragraph 2.

<sup>138</sup> "Chechnya Situation Report," paragraphs 7 and 9.

<sup>139</sup> Gall, "Game of Human Pawns," paragraph 6.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., paragraphs 9 and 10.

remains to be seen, but in light of the situation as a whole perhaps Moscow should cut its losses and grant Chechnya full independence.

## **2. The Implications for Future Warfare**

The implications of the Chechen war extend well beyond Chechnya and Russia, and the terrorism factor of the war, in all probability, will be perpetuated onto the world in future regional wars. The small Chechen wolf soundly defeated the big Russian bison and, without doubt, other wolves were taking note. United States Marine Corps Commandant Charles Krulak has surmised the situation very aptly and with this succinct comment places American warfighters on their mark: "Future war is most likely not the son of Desert Storm; rather, it will be the stepchild of Somalia and Chechnya."<sup>141</sup>

In Somalia, American forces were targeted by warlord clans who never behaved like conventional forces. That was difficult enough to deal with, and the lessons are being heeded. Haiti and Bosnia saw much improved force protection. Chechnya presented a different scenario that more closely resembles Vietnam: an adaptable army trained, led, and skilled in conventional warfare that holds in its arsenal of unconventional tactics the very real potential of classic terrorism for use against noncombatant targets. The military prowess of Basayev and Maskhadov, and other Chechen commanders, is here recognized, but it was not their military skill, in conventional terms, that won the war. Chechnya won the war by taking civilian hostages. The Russian Army was disarmed by the political ramifications of Budennovsk, Kizlyar and Pervomayskoye and the other more varied, smaller scale acts of terrorism, all of

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<sup>141</sup> Finch, "A Face of Future Battle," 33.



which targeted noncombatants. The United States and other large, conventional militaries must prepare to meet the Shamil Basayev of tomorrow. To handle situations like Russia found itself in, the following actions are prudent and all too obvious:

- United States forces must train for handling policing actions, like civilian hostage takings, that may occur in or near the war zone in the absence of, or until such time as, adequate policing agencies can be brought into place.
- The intelligence assessment provided to commanders and the development of Essential Elements of Information must be expanded to prepare American units for contact with terrorist elements attached to, in support of, or operating separately but in the vicinity of the recognized enemy.
- Counterintelligence across the spectrum of intelligence fields must be utilized to deprive the hostage takers of battlefield information during negotiations so as to permit a continuation of the war effort.
- Staff operations elements must develop a cooperative rapport with media representatives in the war zone. Such a relationship can reduce the enemy's access to information and preclude the premature release of information that is vital to the war effort until a more suitable time without denying freedom of the press. (Desert Storm showed a willingness among many media representatives to cooperate with military planners so long as the relationship was forthright and reciprocal.)

Under no circumstances should the war effort be suspended. The enemy will likely resort to terrorism once the situation becomes desperate, as did the Chechens, and

when they are at their most vulnerable. That may be precisely the time to strengthen attacks, not to back off as the Russian army was forced to do.

**C. HOW SIGNIFICANT WAS THE USE OF TERRORISM TO CHECHNYA'S VICTORY?**

Chechnya came back from the brink of a decisive military defeat by the Russian Army in June 1995. Despite a gamut of problems and a protracted struggle to seize its initial objective, Grozny, the capital city, Russian forces had Chechen fighters on the run and running out of places to go. The Chechens fought resiliently but were greatly outnumbered and had taken a beating from Russian bombardments. Pushed deep into the southern mountains, with their last strongholds under attack from advancing forces, the Chechen situation was desperate.

Then, on 14 June 1995, the hostage raid on Budennovsk changed everything. Chechnya effectively shifted the focus of its military strategy away from the Russian forces inside Chechnya to the political vulnerabilities of Moscow and the fears of the Russian people. The images of horrified hostages and corpses, and stories of inept attempts by Russian officials to negotiate a resolution were broadcast internationally by a throng of reporters who converged on Budennovsk and played right into Basayev's hand. After attempts to free the hostages by force failed, Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin, in an unprecedented move, negotiated on live television with Basayev and agreed to every demand except the full removal of Russian forces from Chechnya. Basayev was given volunteer hostages and safe passage back to Chechnya where the cease-fire was already in effect. The Chechen combatants had resorted to classic terrorist tactics with resounding success and returned home to a hero's welcome.

Though the subsequent cease fire agreement, signed on 30 July 1995, did not last very long, it gave the Chechens an opportunity to regroup and to plan their next move. Additionally, as part of the agreement, Russian forces pulled back and consolidated into base camps which gave Chechen fighters an opportunity to infiltrate back into Chechen towns and villages.

Budennovsk was followed by a series of more varied terrorist attacks in rapid succession, from June 1995 through late January 1996. In all, the seven-month Chechen campaign of terror very effectively swayed public opinion against the war effort, created widespread fear among the Russian population well beyond the borders of Chechnya, and capitalized on the vulnerabilities of Russia's fragile political structures.

Russian forces never regained the tactical prominence or momentum they had lost in June 1995. The Russian war effort was stymied, and the problems that had afflicted Russian forces all along became magnified. In March 1996 in an effort to secure reelection, President Boris Yeltsin rushed into a cease fire agreement and a plan for withdrawing Russian forces. When he reneged on the agreement and gave the order to resume attacks on Chechen positions, it was too late for Russian forces that in the previous year had lost their willingness and ability to fight. Chechens retook Grozny in August 1996 with little effort.

Budennovsk was the turning point of the Chechen War, the first in a series of terrorist attacks by Chechen combatants that disabled Russia politically and militarily. Chechnya would assuredly have lost the war in the summer or fall of 1995. Terrorism determined Chechnya's success and Russia's loss.



Figure 3: Shamil Basayev at a press conference in the Budennovsk hospital during the June 1995 hostage raid



Figure 4: Jokhar Dudayev (Chechen President until his death in April 1996)



Figure 5: Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev



Figure 6: Salman Raduyev, leader of the Kizlyar raid in January 1996



Figure 7: Aslan Maskhadov, President of Chechnya



Figure 8: Russian President Boris Yeltsin, right, appoints Alexander Lebed Security Council Secretary in June 1996



Figure 9: Chechen captor with hostages inside the Budennovsk hospital



Figure 10: The first dead from the hospital are turned over to Russian authorities



Figure 11: A nurse and baby escape from the hospital



Figure 12: Remaining hostages emerge from the hospital after Shamil Basayev and his raiders leave Budennovsk on 20 June 1995

Figure 13: Russian forces move in on the Budennovsk hospital (were Chechen fighters hold more than 1000 civilian hostages) for one of two failed rescue attempts on 17 June

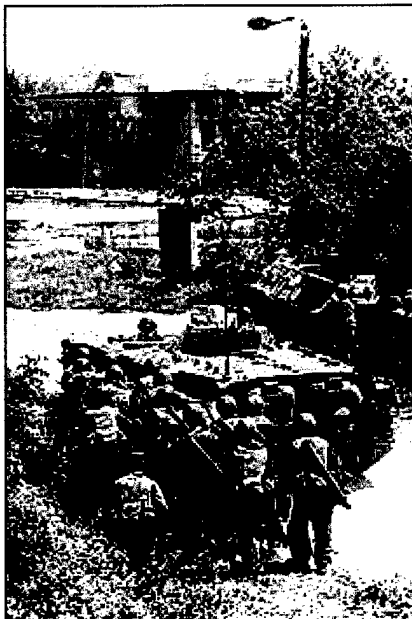


Figure 14: Residents of Budennovsk bury those killed during the seven days of terror





Figure 15: Pervomayskoye is left in ruins after a prolonged battle between Russian authorities and Chechen rebels following the Kizlyar hostage raid, led by Salman Raduyev, in January 1996



Figure 16: Russian soldiers in the vicinity of Vedenov, Chechnya



Figure 17: Grozny, the capital city of Chechnya, in ruins five months into the war (May 1995)



Figure 18: Chechen woman looks for a relative among the dead outside of Grozny



Figure 19: Chechen corpses outside Samashki following a Russian assault in April 1995

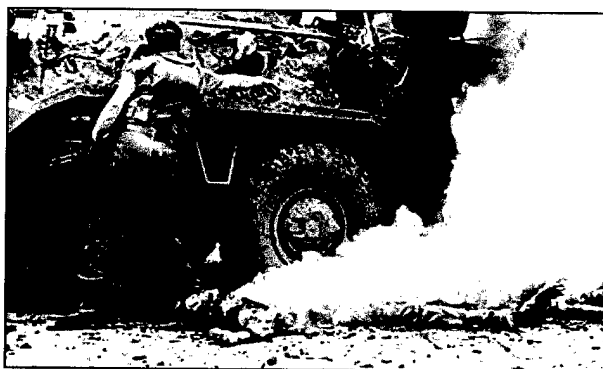


Figure 20: Chechen fighter tosses a grenade into a Russian armored vehicle as Russian corpses smolder in the foreground



Figure 21: Chechen fighters praying in a mountain camp in southern Chechnya

Figure 22: Russian and Chechen troops conduct joint patrols in late 1996



Figure 23: Chechen men in a victorious pose among the rubble (Chechen flag in upper left)

## **APPENDIX. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN CHECHNYA 1991-1996**

This chronology has been compiled to serve as a quick reference for key historical events surrounding the Chechen War. It has been designed specifically to compliment the thesis, *Success of Terrorism in War: The Case of Chechnya*.

Summer 1988 – Anti-communist political parties begin to emerge in Chechnya.

January 1989 – The first Chechen, Doku Zavgaev, is elected as Communist Party Secretary in Chechnya.

23 November 1990 – The Chechen National Congress (CNC) is convened; Jokhar Dudayev is elected as the Executive Committee Chairman.

17-19 August 1991 – Failed coup attempt occurs in Moscow; Shamil Basayev, in Moscow at the time, takes part in support of Yeltsin.

6 September 1991 – Dudayev gains control of the Chechen government by forcing Zavgaev to sign a statement abdicating his presidential powers to the Executive Committee.

15 September 1991 – The Ingush assembly passes a resolution to separate from Chechnya.

27 October 1991 – Jokhar Dudayev is elected President of Chechnya and declares Chechen independence from Russia.

7 November 1991 – Yeltsin declares a state of emergency in the Chechen Republic and dispatches troops to Grozny. Chechen rebels hold the Russian troops at the Grozny airport until the state of emergency fails to gain confirmation three days later. (During this time, Shamil Basayev hijacks a Turkish passenger plane.)

January 1992 – Chechnya gets involved in the Abkhazian struggle for independence from Georgia by providing political asylum to deposed Georgian President Zvaïd Gumsakhurdia and by sending Chechen troops, led by Basayev, into Abkhazia.

4 January 1992 – The Supreme Soviet adopts into law the creation of the Ingush Republic in the Russian Federation.

1992-1994 – Chechnya erodes into a civil war and Russia suspected of providing support to Dudayev's opposition.

26 November 1994 – Russian troops are captured aiding in an attack against Dudayev.



11 December 1994 – Russia launches a full-scale military attack into Chechnya only two days after Yeltsin signs the war decree.

19 January 1995 – Russian troops occupy the Presidential Palace in the Chechen capital of Grozny.

March 1995 – The OSCE begins a monitoring mission inside Chechnya.

Late-April 1995 – Chechen fighters have been forced deep into the southern mountains and Russian forces are beginning to attack the last remaining Chechen strongholds.

14 June 1995 – Basayev and approximately 150 Chechen troops conduct a terrorist attack on the Russian town of Budennovsk. They take more than 1,500 civilians hostage and hold them in the town hospital.

18-19 June 1995 – Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomydrin negotiates with Basayev over live television. Russia halts military operations in Chechnya, and Basayev and his men are guaranteed safe return back to Chechnya.

30 July 1995 – Russia and Chechnya sign a cease-fire agreement. Russian forces pull back into base camps throughout Chechnya. Chechen forces begin to infiltrate back into Chechen towns and villages.

August 1995 – Dudayev disavows the post-Budennovsk agreements.

November 1995 – Basayev plants a package of radioactive material inside a Moscow park and leads a reporter to the site.

9-19 January 1996 – Chechen field commander Salman Raduyev leads a terrorist attack on town of Kizlyar. The following day Raduyev is halted trying to return to Chechnya with hostages and a stand off with federal troops takes place in Pervomayskoye.

16 January 1996 – ‘Friends of Basayev’ hijack a Turkish ferry taking 151 hostages.

6 March 1996 – Chechen forces retake parts of Grozny.

31 March 1996 – Russia begins a partial withdrawal of troops from Chechnya.

21 April 1996 – Dudayev is killed by Russian rocket fire; Chechen Vice-President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev assumes the Presidency.

27 May 1996 – Yeltsin and Yandarbiyev meet in Moscow and agree to the terms of cease-fire.

18 June 1996 – Alexander Lebed is appointed as Security Council Secretary for the Russian Federation. He vows to bring an end to the war in Chechnya.

July 1996 – Yeltsin wins reelection. Moscow quickly reneges on the cease-fire agreement and resumes attacks on Chechen positions.

6 August 1996 – Heavy fighting resumes in Grozny; Basayev leads Chechen fighters and reclaims the city.

10-12 August 1996 – Alexander Lebed takes over negotiations with Chechen officials; a cease-fire promptly begins.

22 August 1996 – An agreement over the conditions of a truce is reached between Lebed and Maskhadov, the Chechen Chief of Staff. The agreement delays the decision of Chechnya's independence for five-years.

January 1997 – The last Russian troops leave Chechnya.



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